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Q2 2025

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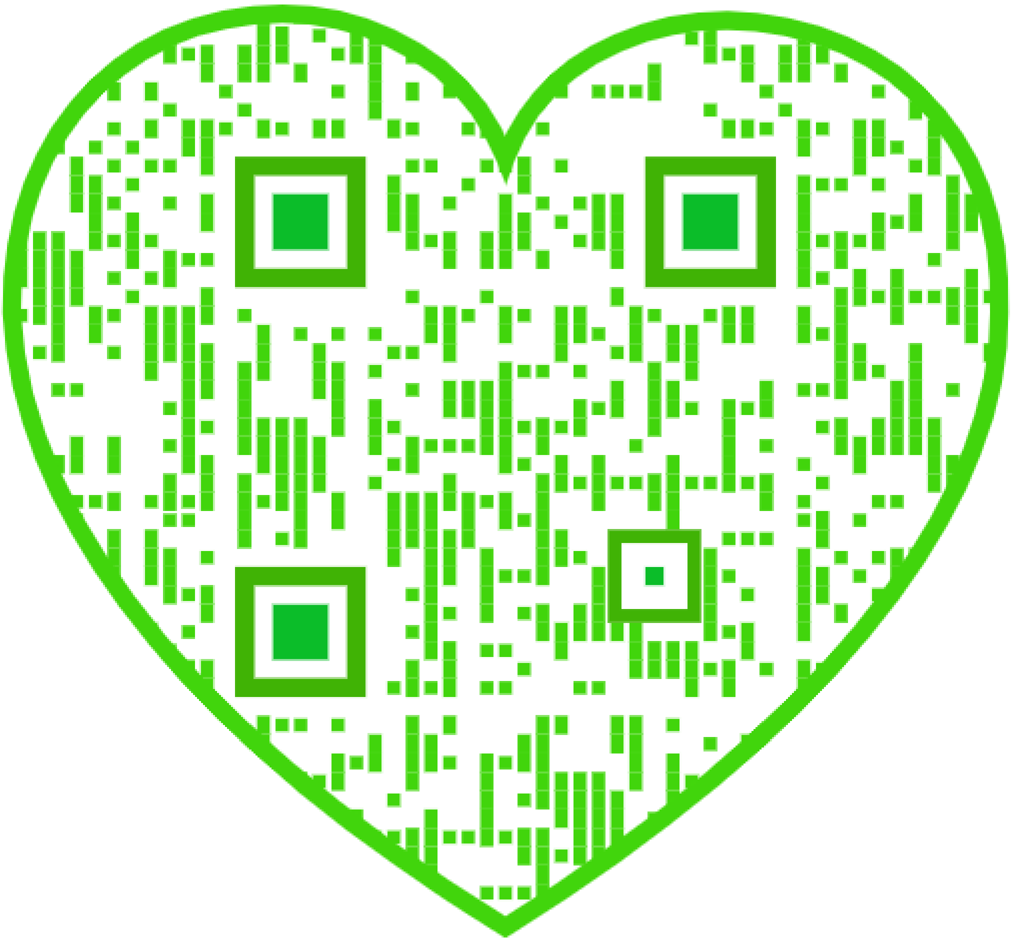

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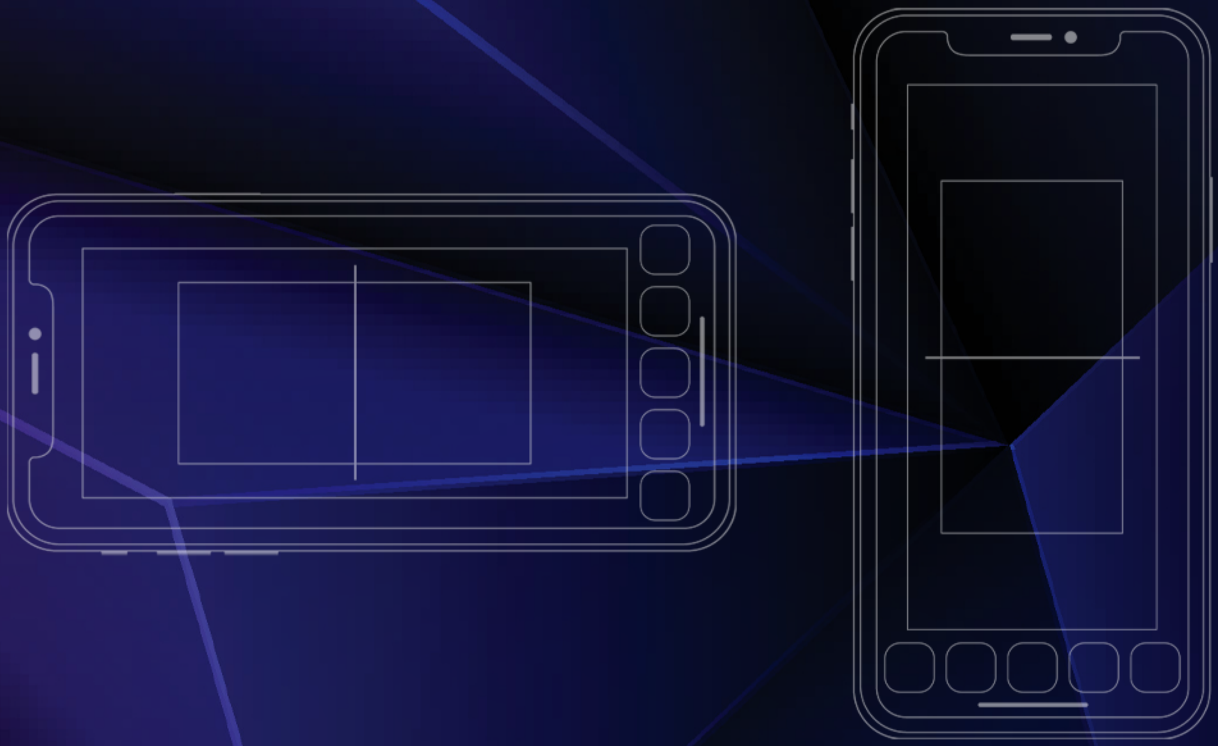

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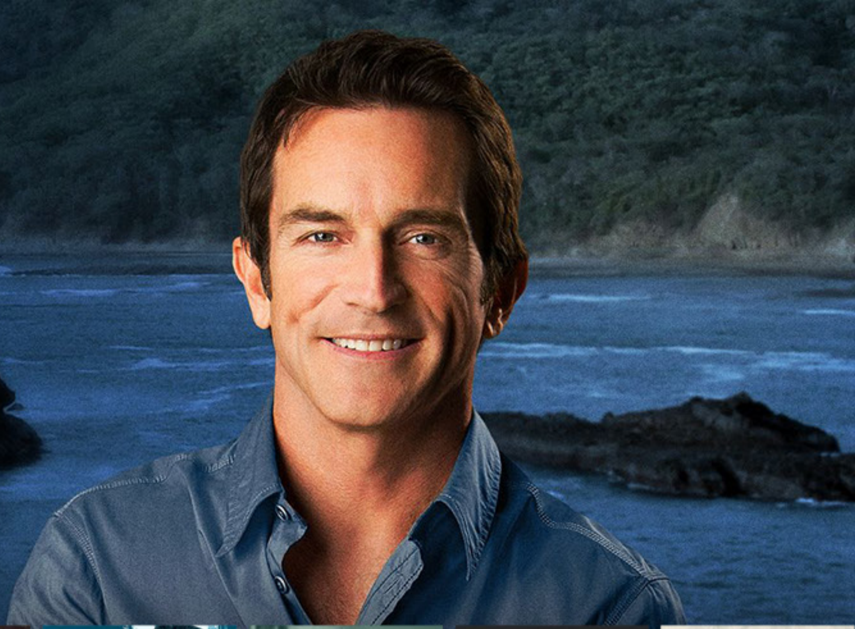

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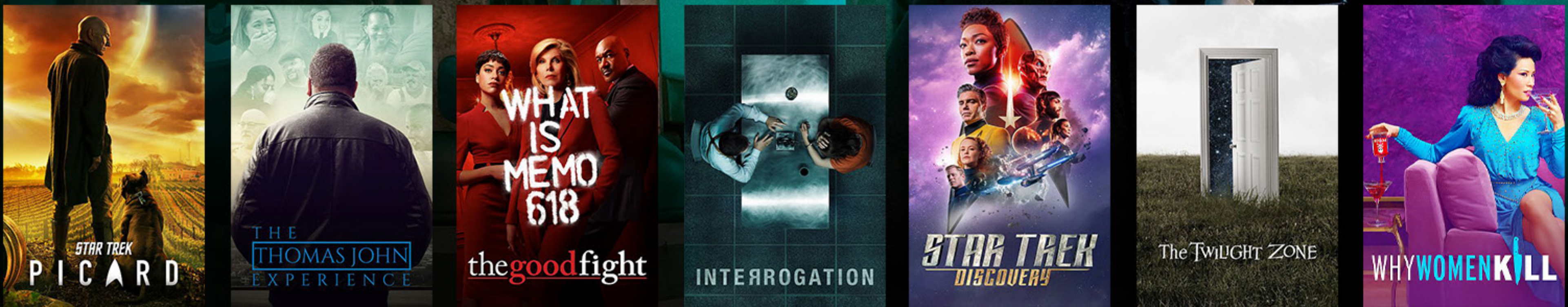
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APPLE POSTS STRONG Q2 2025 EARNINGS DRIVEN BY IPHONE SALES

Apple reported a robust second quarter for fiscal 2025, ending March 29, 2025, with revenue of $95.4 billion, a 5% increase year-over-year, and earnings per share of $1.65, up 8%, surpassing Wall Street expectations.

The Cupertino-based company highlighted strong iPhone demand, with sales reaching $46.84 billion, a 2% rise from $46 billion the previous year, exceeding analyst estimates of $45.94 billion.

For consumers, investors, and the tech industry, the results reflect Apple's resilience despite tariff

challenges, with CEO Tim Cook noting a shift to sourcing most U.S.-sold iPhones from India to mitigate costs.

The quarter saw double-digit growth in services revenue, climbing 12% to $26.65 billion, though slightly below projections of $26.71 billion. Mac sales increased 7% to $7.95 billion, and iPad sales rose 15% to $6.4 billion.

However, Greater China revenue fell 2.3% to $16 billion, impacted by a nearly 10% drop in iPhone shipments, as reported by International Data Corp.

Apple authorized a $100 billion share buyback and raised its dividend by 4% to 26 cents per share, returning $29 billion to shareholders, though shares dipped 3% in premarket trading due to a projected $900 million tariff-related cost increase for Q3.

REVENUE AND EARNINGS PERFORMANCE

Apple's Q2 revenue of $95.4 billion, up 5.1% from $90.75 billion a year ago, beat consensus estimates of $94.2 billion, per Bloomberg.

Net income rose 4.8% to $24.78 billion, or $1.65 per share, topping Wall Street's $1.62 forecast, driven by a 1.9% increase in iPhone revenue to $46.84 billion.

Services, including Apple Music and iCloud, grew 12% to $26.65 billion, while Mac and iPad segments saw gains of 7% to $7.95 billion and 15% to $6.4 billion, respectively, as reported in the company's earnings release.

Operating cash flow reached $24 billion, supporting significant shareholder returns.

TARIFF MITIGATION THROUGH INDIA SOURCING

Tim Cook revealed that the majority of iPhones sold in the U.S. this quarter will come from India, with iPads, Macs, Apple Watches, and AirPods sourced from Vietnam, to counter President Trump's 145% tariffs on Chinese goods.

The tariffs, which had a limited impact on Q2, are expected to add $900 million in costs for the April-June quarter, as Cook noted during the earnings call. Apple's strategic shift includes sourcing over 19 billion chips from the U.S., reducing reliance on China, where most non-U.S. product sales originate, per Yahoo Finance.

No significant demand surge due to tariff fears was observed in Q2.

CHINA MARKET CHALLENGES

Revenue from Greater China declined 2.3% to $16 billion, missing analyst expectations of $16.8 billion, reflecting a nearly 10% drop in iPhone shipments, per International Data Corp.

Domestic competitors Huawei and Xiaomi saw over 20% shipment growth, eroding Apple's market share in the region.

Cook attributed part of the decline to economic factors but highlighted upcoming software updates, including Apple Intelligence for European markets, Japan, and Korea in April, to bolster competitiveness, as stated in the investor call.

IDC

ANALYZE THE FUTURE

SHARE BUYBACK AND DIVIDEND INCREASE

Apple's board approved a $100 billion share repurchase program, one of the largest in its history, and increased the quarterly dividend by 4% to 26 cents per share, reinforcing its commitment to shareholder value.

The company returned $29 billion to investors in Q2, supported by strong operating cash flow, as CFO Kevan Parekh noted in the earnings release.

Despite the positive results, shares fell 3% in premarket trading, reflecting investor concerns about the $900 million tariff cost projection and China's performance, per Investopedia.

STRATEGIC AND COMPETITIVE OUTLOOK

Apple's Q2 success, driven by iPhone sales and services growth, contrasts with a 7% global sales decline in Greater China, where competitors like BYD and Geely challenge its EV and tech dominance.

The company's tariff strategy, emphasizing Indian production, aligns with broader industry shifts, as seen in Mercedes-Benz's Alabama expansion.

Cook's diplomatic efforts, including a $1 million donation to Trump's inauguration and private meetings, aim to navigate trade policies.

The upcoming iOS 18.5 update, expanding satellite connectivity, and Apple Intelligence enhancements signal continued innovation, despite delays in AI rollout compared to rivals like Microsoft, per The New York Times.

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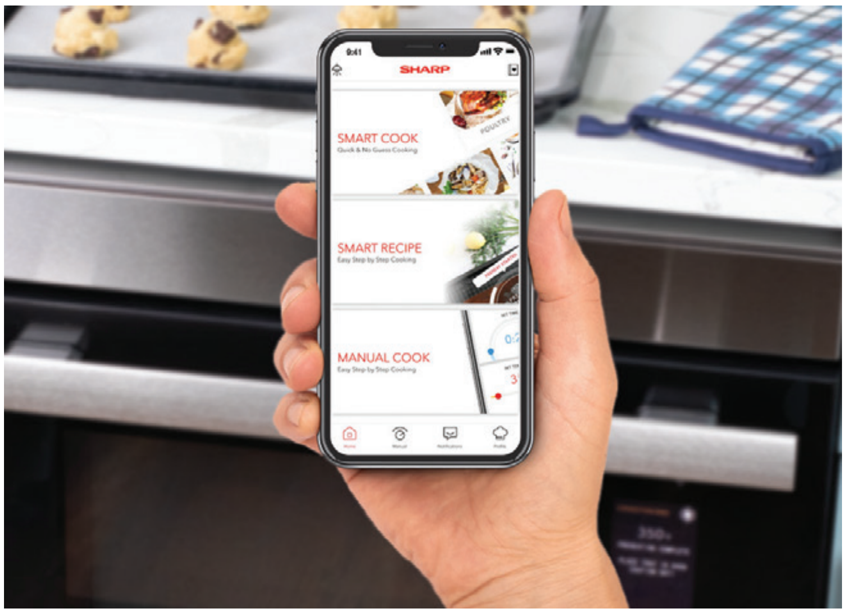

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VOLVO CARS SALES DROP 11% IN APRIL WITH SHARP DECLINE IN FULLY ELECTRIC VEHICLES

Image: David Shepherd

Volvo Cars reported an 11% decline in global sales for April, totaling 58,881 vehicles compared to the previous year, driven by a significant 32% drop in fully electric vehicle (EV) sales, as announced this week.

The Sweden-based automaker, majority-owned by China's Geely, saw electrified vehicles, including plug-in hybrids, fall 16%, accounting for 45% of total sales, while fully electric models comprised 20%.

For investors, consumers, and the automotive industry, the slump reflects challenges from U.S. tariffs, shifting consumer preferences, and intense competition, prompting Volvo to withdraw its earnings forecast for the next two years.

The sales decline, which sent Volvo's shares down 3% and contributed to a 29% year-to-date stock drop, highlights the impact of new U.S. tariffs under President Donald Trump, affecting Volvo's strategy in the American market.

The company, which did not provide regional sales breakdowns, is working with Geely to cut costs while maintaining sales of hybrids and combustion-engine models favored by U.S. consumers.

The launch of the fully electric ES90 sedan in March 2025 failed to offset the broader EV sales downturn, raising concerns about Volvo's electrification goals.

APRIL SALES PERFORMANCE

Volvo sold 58,881 vehicles in April, an 11% decrease from the prior year, with fully electric vehicles dropping 32% to represent 20% of total sales. Electrified vehicles, including plug-in hybrids, declined 16%, making up 45% of sales volumes. The company did not disclose regional sales data, limiting insights into specific market trends.

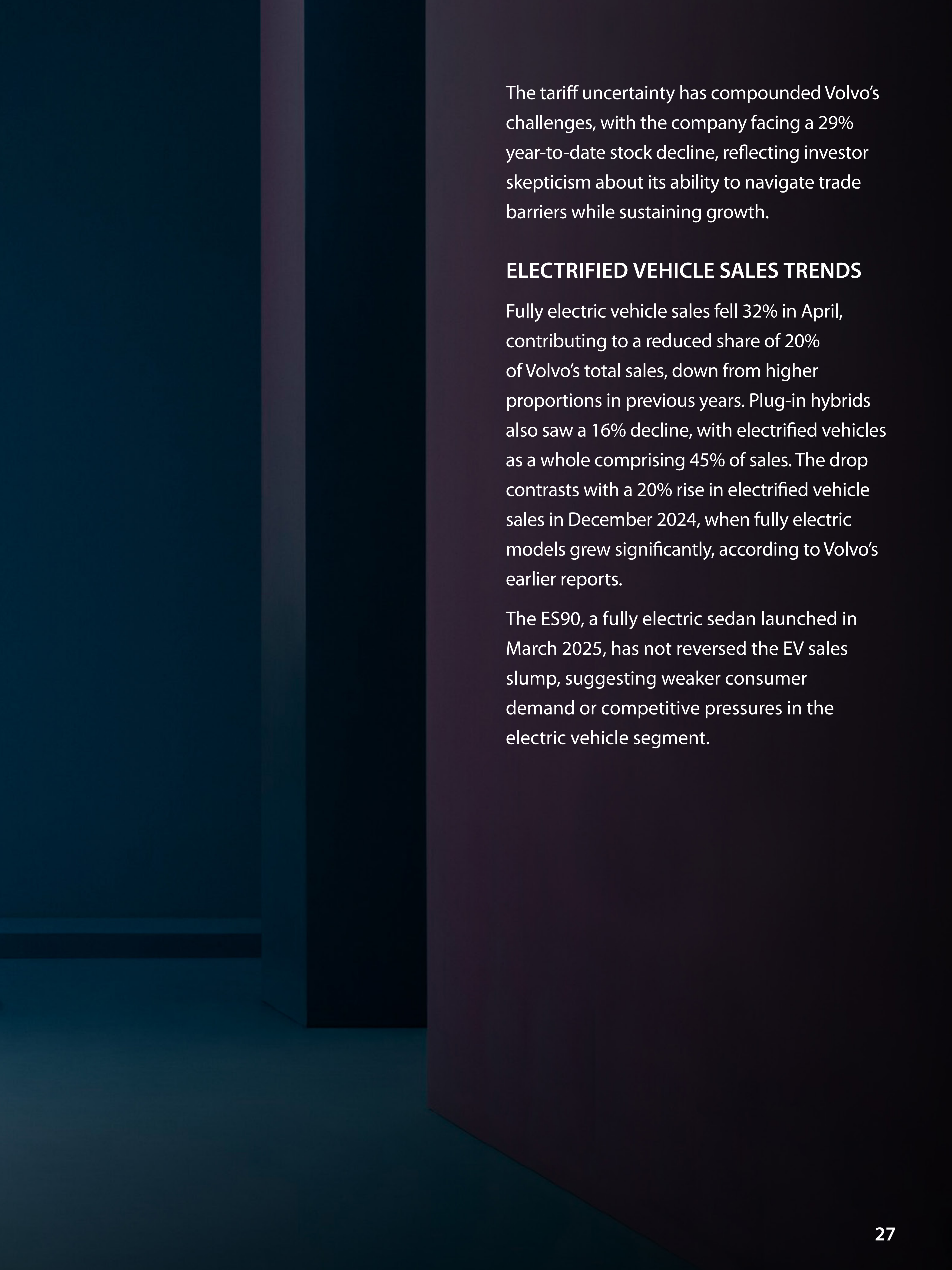
Shares fell 3% this week, reflecting investor concerns about the sales slump, as reported by legacy press.

The downturn follows a 10% sales drop in March, when Volvo delivered 70,737 vehicles, with EVs falling 26%, indicating a consistent decline in demand for its electric models.

IMPACT OF U.S. TARIFFS

New U.S. tariffs, including a 25% duty on imported vehicles and parts, have pressured Volvo's operations, leading the company to withdraw its earnings forecast for 2025 and 2026.

The tariffs, part of President Trump's trade policies, have disrupted supply chains, particularly for components sourced from Europe and Asia. Volvo, balancing cost-cutting with Geely, aims to maintain sales in the U.S., where consumers prefer hybrids and combustion-engine vehicles, as noted in company statements.



The tariff uncertainty has compounded Volvo's challenges, with the company facing a 29% year-to-date stock decline, reflecting investor skepticism about its ability to navigate trade barriers while sustaining growth.

ELECTRIFIED VEHICLE SALES TRENDS

Fully electric vehicle sales fell 32% in April, contributing to a reduced share of 20% of Volvo's total sales, down from higher proportions in previous years. Plug-in hybrids also saw a 16% decline, with electrified vehicles as a whole comprising 45% of sales. The drop contrasts with a 20% rise in electrified vehicle sales in December 2024, when fully electric models grew significantly, according to Volvo's earlier reports.

The ES90, a fully electric sedan launched in March 2025, has not reversed the EV sales slump, suggesting weaker consumer demand or competitive pressures in the electric vehicle segment.

COMPETITIVE PRESSURES AND MARKET DYNAMICS

Volvo faces competition from Chinese automakers like BYD and Geely's Polestar, which reported a 76% sales increase in Q1 2025, as well as U.S. firms like General Motors and Ford, which gained market share as Tesla's EV sales fell 8.6% in the same period. In Europe, Volvo's sales align with a broader trend, with Tesla's sales plunging 37.2% in Q1 2025, while overall EV sales rose 28%, per the European Automobile Manufacturers' Association.

The company's struggle to maintain EV momentum reflects shifting consumer preferences toward hybrids, as U.S. buyers favor models like Toyota's RAV4, according to industry data.

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VOLVO

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Extraordinary Magic
Ben Rector
Anna's Phone
Roaming
Spotify
Bluetooth
Range and t...
Google Assistant
Camera
Glove box
Max defrost
68°
72°

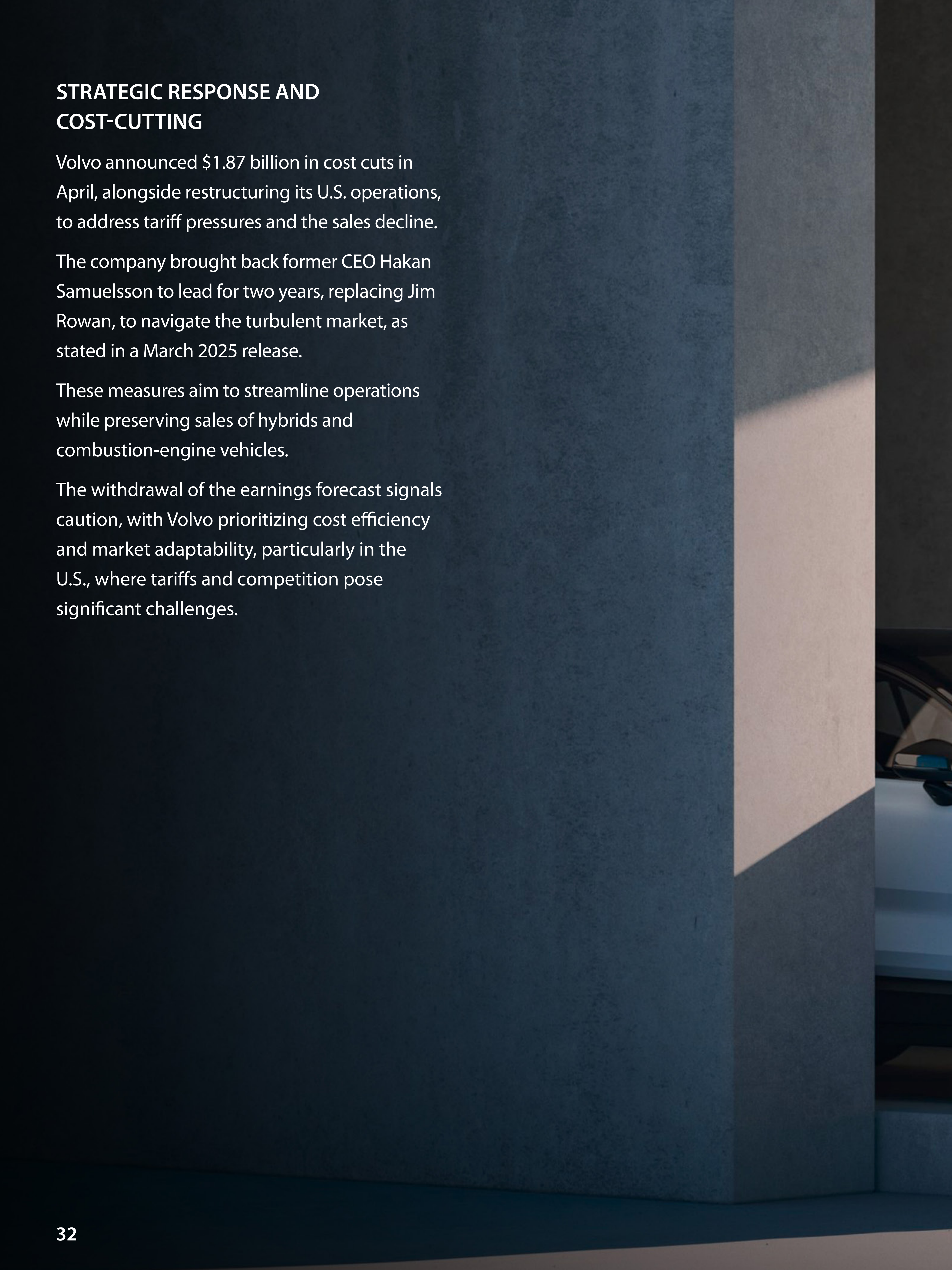
STRATEGIC RESPONSE AND COST-CUTTING

Volvo announced $1.87 billion in cost cuts in April, alongside restructuring its U.S. operations, to address tariff pressures and the sales decline.

The company brought back former CEO Hakan Samuelsson to lead for two years, replacing Jim Rowan, to navigate the turbulent market, as stated in a March 2025 release.

These measures aim to streamline operations while preserving sales of hybrids and combustion-engine vehicles.

The withdrawal of the earnings forecast signals caution, with Volvo prioritizing cost efficiency and market adaptability, particularly in the U.S., where tariffs and competition pose significant challenges.



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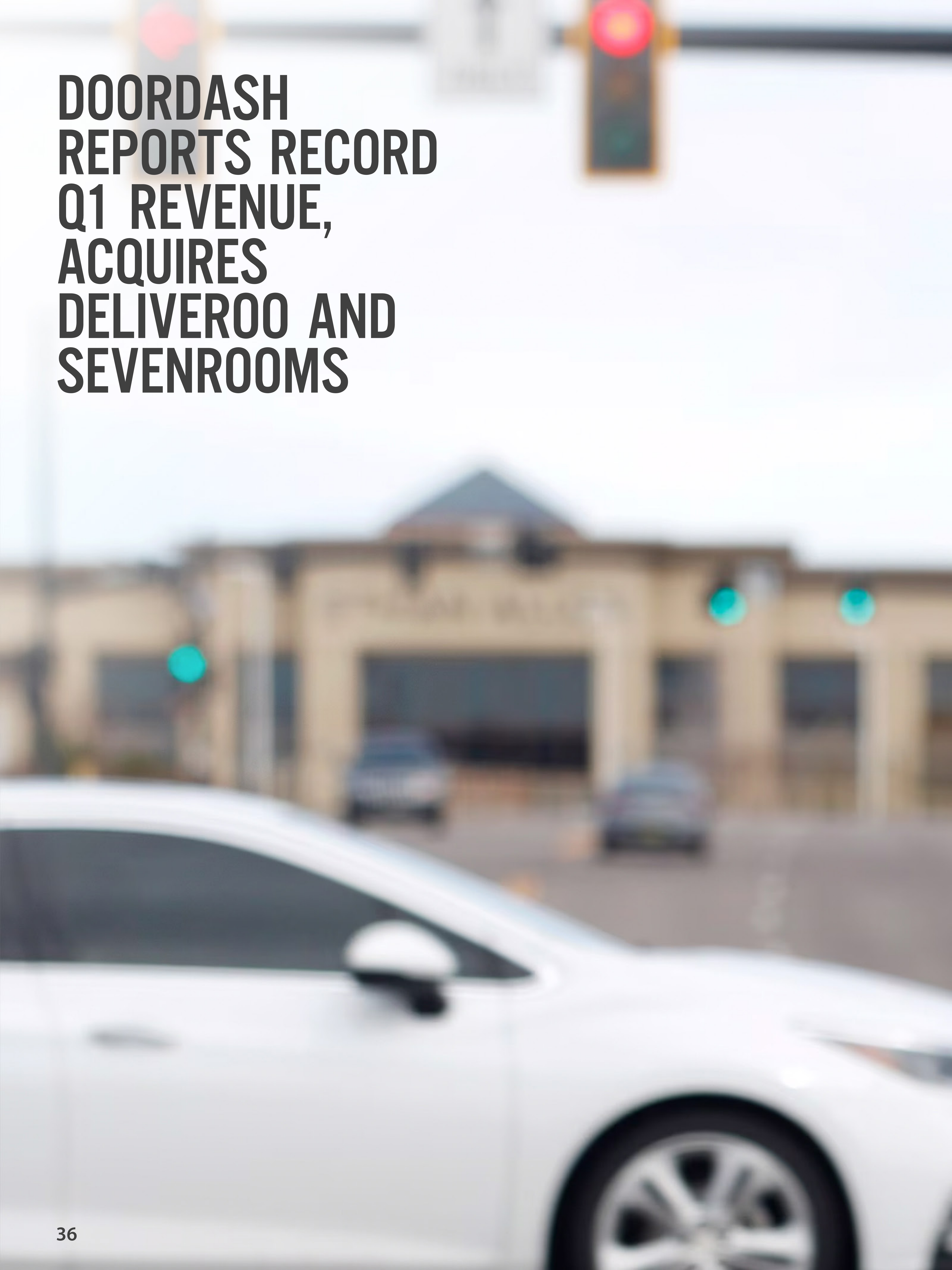
DOORDASH REPORTS RECORD Q1 REVENUE, ACQUIRES DELIVEROO AND SEVENROOMS



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DoorDash announced record first-quarter revenue of $3.03 billion, up 21% from the previous year, alongside two major acquisitions: Britain's Deliveroo for $3.9 billion and New York-based SevenRooms for $1.2 billion.

The San Francisco-based food delivery company saw total orders climb 18% to 732 million, a quarterly high, but its shares fell 5% after missing Wall Street's revenue expectations of $3.09 billion.

For investors, merchants, and consumers, the acquisitions signal DoorDash's ambition to expand its global footprint and diversify its platform beyond delivery.

The Deliveroo deal, valued at £2.9 billion, enhances DoorDash's presence in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, adding nine countries to its operations.

The SevenRooms acquisition, a hospitality tech firm, aims to boost in-store sales for merchants by integrating reservation and customer management tools into DoorDash's Commerce Platform.

Both deals, expected to close in late 2025, are the company's largest since its 2022 acquisition of Wolt Enterprises for $8.1 billion. Despite economic concerns, DoorDash's CEO Tony Xu stated demand for deliveries remained strong, with no observed changes in consumer behavior.

RECORD Q1 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

DoorDash reported $3.03 billion in revenue for Q1 2025, a 21% increase year-over-year, driven by a 20% rise in marketplace gross order value to $23.1 billion.

SevenRooms

Total orders reached 732 million, up 18% from the prior year, aligning with StreetAccount's estimate of 732.7 million.

Adjusted earnings per share were 44 cents, surpassing analyst expectations of 39 cents, per LSEG data. Net income was $193 million, reflecting growth in customer base and engagement, as noted in the company's earnings release.

DELIVEROO ACQUISITION DETAILS

DoorDash agreed to acquire Deliveroo for £2.9 billion ($3.9 billion) in cash, offering 180 pence per share, a 29% premium over Deliveroo's closing price before the April 2025 bid announcement.

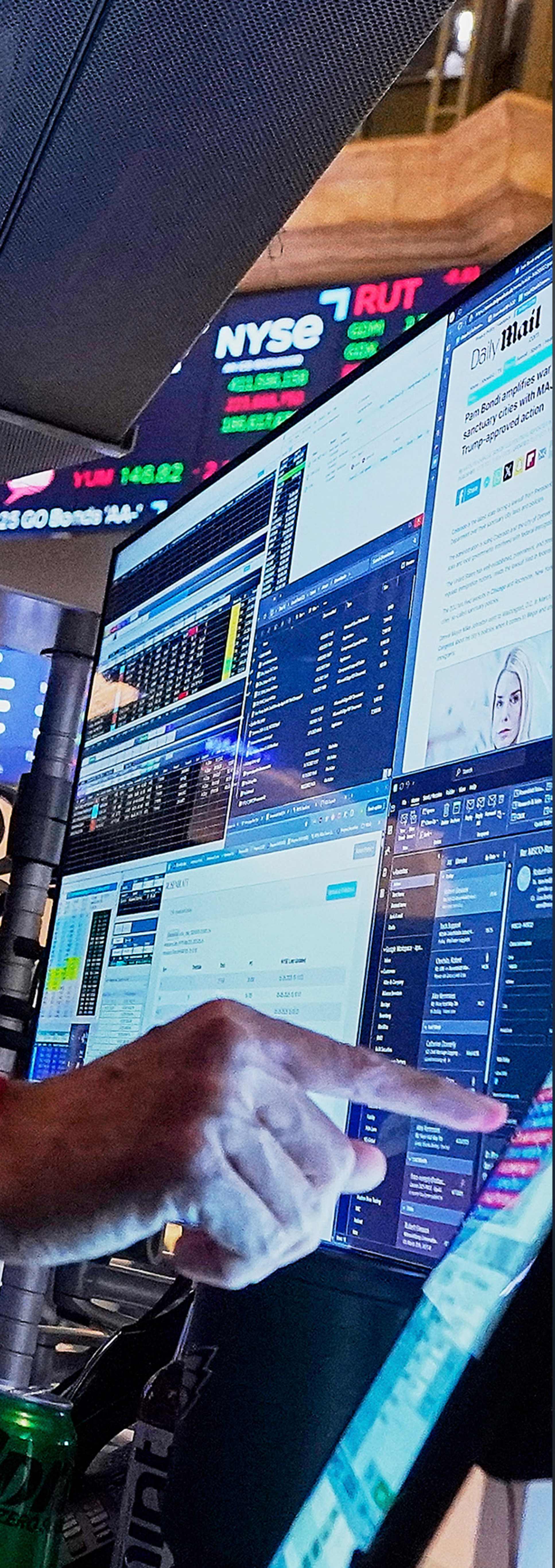
The deal, expected to close in Q4 2025 pending regulatory and shareholder approvals, will expand DoorDash's operations to 40 countries, serving over 50 million monthly users with a combined gross order value of $90 billion, per the company's press release.

Deliveroo, with 7 million monthly users across nine countries, reported £2 billion in revenue for 2024, as cited by TechCrunch. The acquisition strengthens DoorDash's competition against Just Eat Takeaway and Uber Eats in Europe.

SEVENROOMS ACQUISITION STRATEGY

DoorDash's $1.2 billion all-cash acquisition of SevenRooms, a New York-based hospitality tech company, targets enhancing its Commerce Platform with tools for reservations, waitlists, and guest data analytics.

76
EXIT



SevenRooms, serving 13,000 venues globally, including Marriott International and Nobu, will integrate its CRM and marketing software to help merchants drive in-store sales, as stated by Vice President of Strategy Parisa Sadrzadeh.

The deal, set to close in the second half of 2025, marks DoorDash's first SaaS acquisition, pending regulatory approval, per Restaurant Business.

The company plans to invest in SevenRooms' sales and product features post-closing.

STRATEGIC EXPANSION AND MARKET POSITION

The acquisitions position DoorDash, the largest U.S. food delivery platform with a 56% market share, to diversify beyond delivery into hospitality tech and global markets. The Deliveroo deal adds 176,000 merchants and 7 million users, while SevenRooms brings 13,000 venues, expanding DoorDash's reach to over 500,000 partners across 40 countries, per UPI.

The company's prior $8.1 billion acquisition of Wolt in 2022 added 22 countries, and these new deals further its goal of growing local commerce, as CEO Tony Xu emphasized in a statement.

DoorDash's stock, down 5% after the earnings report, has risen 20% year-to-date, reflecting investor confidence despite the revenue miss, as noted by Investing.com.

The company's focus on grocery delivery and affordability initiatives contributed to order growth, though lower-margin categories slightly reduced net revenue margin to 13% from 13.5% in Q4 2024.

FUTURE OUTLOOK AND CHALLENGES

DoorDash projects adjusted EBITDA of $600 million to $650 million for Q2 2025, compared to StreetAccount's $639 million estimate, signaling cautious optimism. The company noted potential geopolitical and currency risks from its expanded international presence but did not mention tariff impacts, per Yahoo Finance.

Analysts at Bernstein and Citizens JMP maintained Outperform ratings with $210 and $225 price targets, respectively, viewing the acquisitions as strategic for growth, while Cantor Fitzgerald adjusted its target to $210, citing macroeconomic concerns, per Investing.com.

The Deliveroo and SevenRooms deals, subject to regulatory approval, are expected to close in Q4 2025 and the second half of 2025, respectively, with both companies operating independently until then.

DOORDASH

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NETFLIX UNVEILS MAJOR INTERFACE OVERHAUL WITH AI-POWERED SEARCH AND TIKTOK-STYLE FEED

Netflix has announced a significant redesign of its TV and mobile app interfaces, introducing an AI-powered search feature and a TikTok-style vertical feed, set to roll out globally starting May 19, 2025.

The overhaul aims to enhance user experience by making content discovery more intuitive and personalized, addressing the challenge of navigating the platform's vast library.

For subscribers, content creators, and streaming industry observers, the update signals Netflix's push to stay competitive in a crowded market, leveraging advanced technology to keep its 320 million global users engaged.

The new TV interface offers detailed title information, responsive recommendations, and a personalized "My Netflix" hub, while the mobile app's vertical feed delivers short, engaging video clips to spark interest in new shows and movies.

The OpenAI-powered search, available on select devices, allows conversational queries like "find thrillers with strong female leads," delivering tailored results.

These changes, tested over the past year, reflect Netflix's response to user feedback about decision fatigue, with the company projecting improved retention and engagement metrics by Q3 2025.

REDESIGNED TV INTERFACE

The updated TV interface, launching May 19, 2025, features a streamlined homepage with detailed title information, including synopses, runtimes, award wins, and key cast members, displayed upfront during browsing.

A "My Netflix" hub centralizes users' Continue Watching, My List, and Remind Me sections,

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Title Details
Box Art
AFTE
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Details
Synopsis

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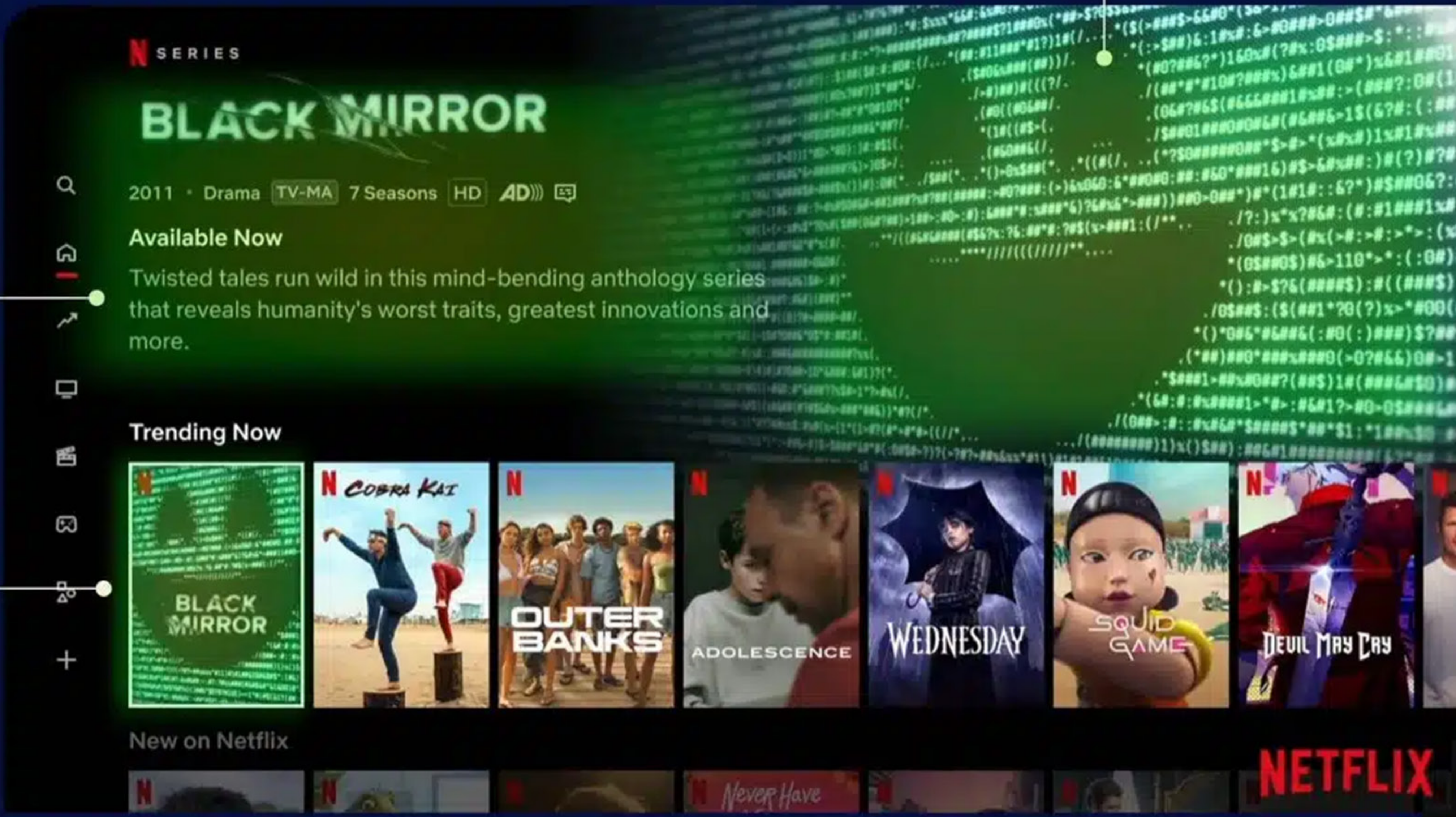
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New on Netflix
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NETFLIX

Twisted tales run wild in this mind-bending anthology series that reveals humanity's worst traits, greatest innovations and more.

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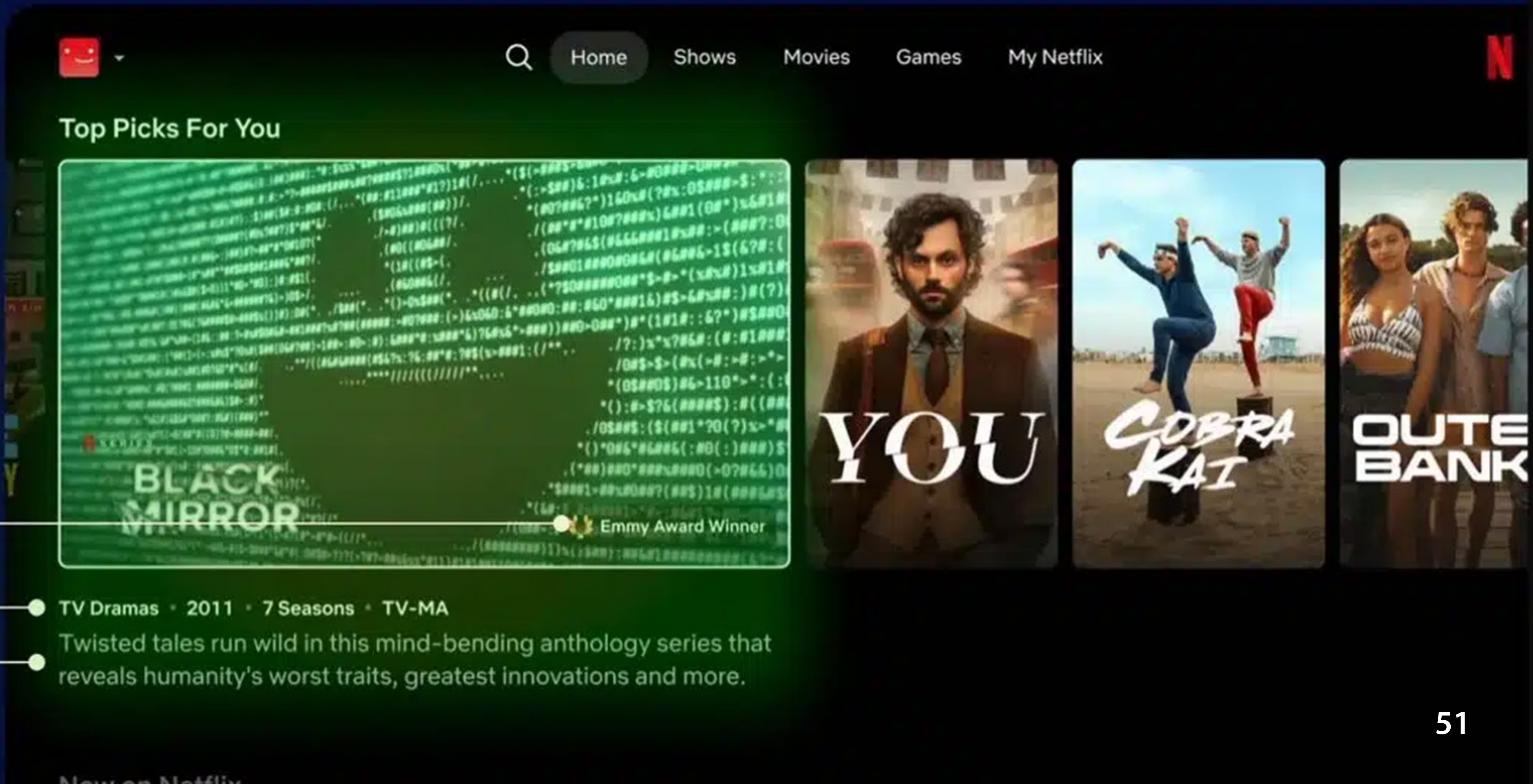
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BLACK MIRROR
Emmy Award Winner
YOU
COBRA KAI
OUTE BANK
New on Netflix

TV Dramas · 2011 · 7 Seasons · TV-MA

Twisted tales run wild in this mind-bending anthology series that reveals humanity's worst traits, greatest innovations and more.

making it easier to track viewing progress. The interface uses responsive recommendations, surfacing content based on recent activity, such as suggesting romantic comedies after watching Set It Up.

Most TVs and streaming devices will support the redesign, with a welcome message guiding users through the changes, as confirmed in Netflix's announcement.

TIKTOK-STYLE VERTICAL FEED FOR MOBILE

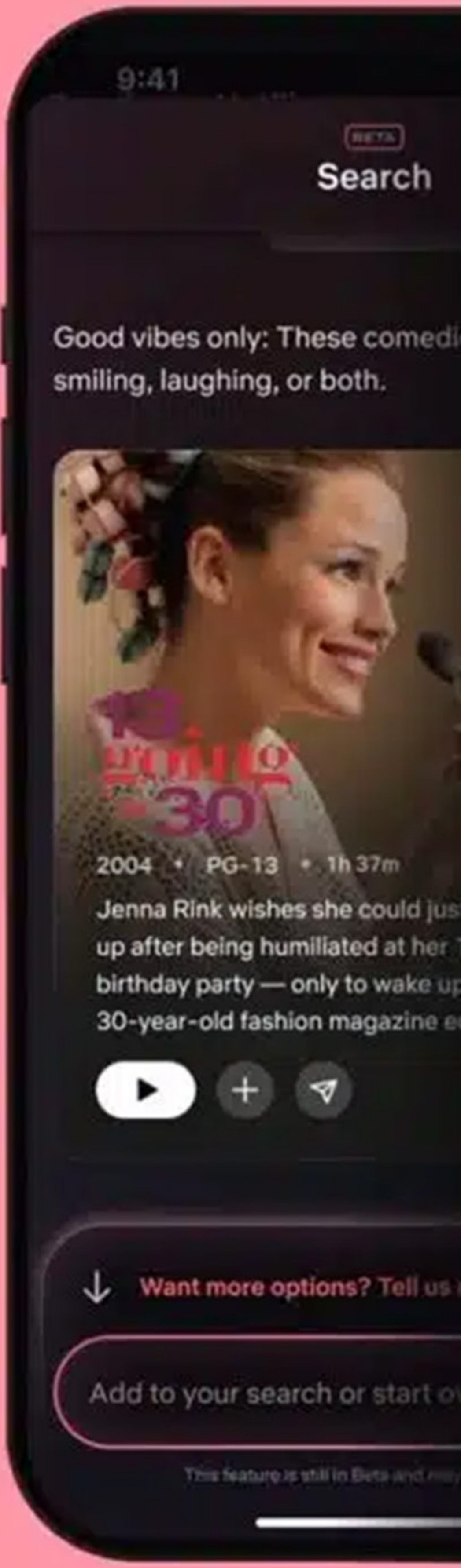
The mobile app introduces a TikTok-style vertical feed, returning after a brief experiment in 2023, to showcase short video clips from Netflix's catalog.

The feed, accessible from the app's homepage, promotes new releases and trending titles through 15- to 30-second previews, designed to capture user attention quickly.

For example, a clip from The Four Seasons might highlight a comedic moment, prompting users to add it to their list. The feed, rolling out globally in June 2025, aims to reduce browsing time and increase content discovery, particularly for mobile users, who represent 70% of Netflix's engagement, per company data.

OPENAI-POWERED SEARCH FUNCTIONALITY

Netflix's new search feature, powered by OpenAI and available on select smart TVs starting July 2025, allows users to ask conversational questions like "show me sci-fi series with aliens" or "find movies starring Tom Hardy."



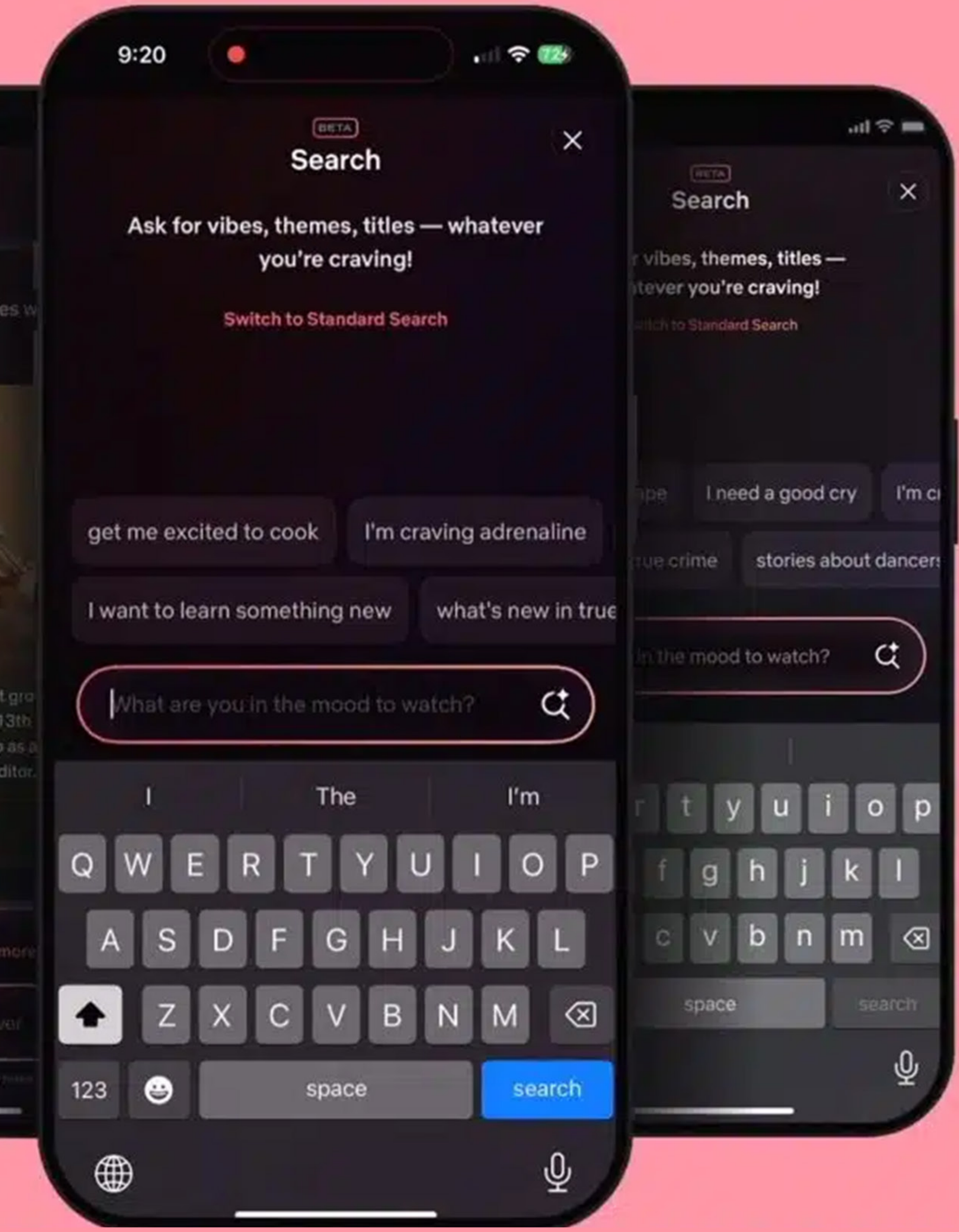
Good vibes only: These comedi
smiling, laughing, or both.

Jenna Rink wishes she could jus
up after being humiliated at her
birthday party — only to wake up
30-year-old fashion magazine e

Want more options? Tell us

Add to your search or start o

This feature is still in Beta and



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Search
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get me excited to cook
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I want to learn something new
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stories about dancers
What are you in the mood to watch?
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Ask for vibes, themes, titles — whatever you're craving!

The AI processes queries to deliver precise results, pulling from Netflix's library of over 8,000 titles.

Unlike traditional keyword searches, the feature understands context, offering suggestions like Black Mirror for dystopian themes or Havoc for Hardy fans.

The search will expand to mobile devices by Q4 2025, with Netflix planning to refine its capabilities based on user feedback, as outlined in the company's press release.

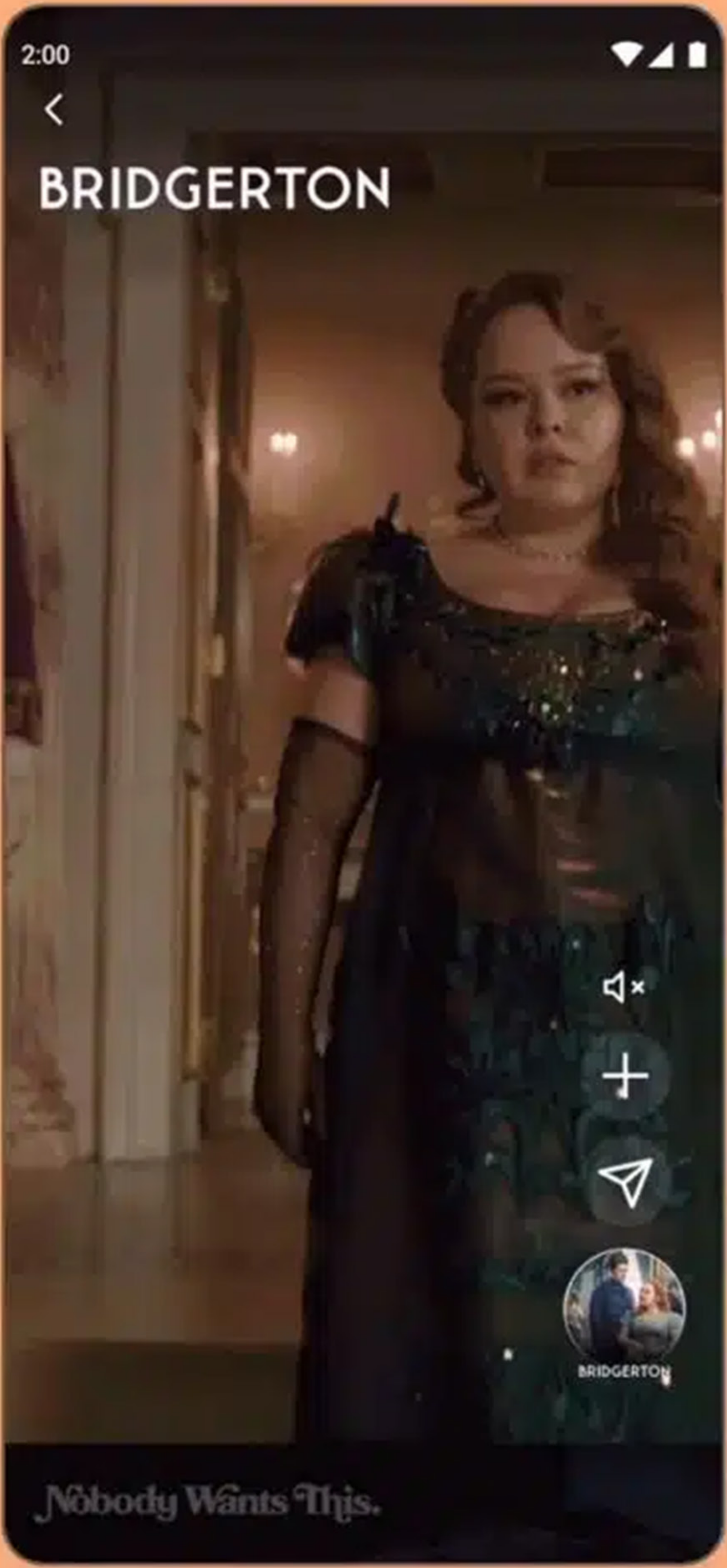
USER EXPERIENCE IMPROVEMENTS

The overhaul addresses user complaints about navigating Netflix's extensive catalog, with internal studies showing 20% of users abandon searches due to choice overload.

The redesigned interface reduces decision fatigue by prioritizing relevant titles, using algorithms that adapt to viewing habits. For instance, horror fans might see Fear Street: Prom Queen highlighted after watching Smile.

The "My Netflix" hub consolidates personalized content, while the vertical feed offers quick previews to entice users, with testing indicating a 15% increase in content starts, per Netflix's research.

The update also improves accessibility, with enhanced subtitle options and audio descriptions for 80% of new releases, ensuring inclusivity for users with visual or hearing impairments, as part of Netflix's 2025 accessibility roadmap.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Nobody Wants This.

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IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE AND FUTURE PLANS

The TV interface redesign begins rolling out May 19, 2025, reaching all eligible devices by July, followed by the mobile vertical feed in June. The OpenAI-powered search will debut on select smart TVs in July, with mobile integration planned for October 2025.

Netflix will continue testing features, potentially adding voice search and gamified content discovery by 2026, based on user adoption rates.

The company expects the overhaul to boost subscriber retention by 5% and reduce churn by 3% by year-end, as projected in its investor briefing.

The updates, developed with feedback from 10,000 user surveys, aim to solidify Netflix's position against competitors like Amazon Prime and Disney+.

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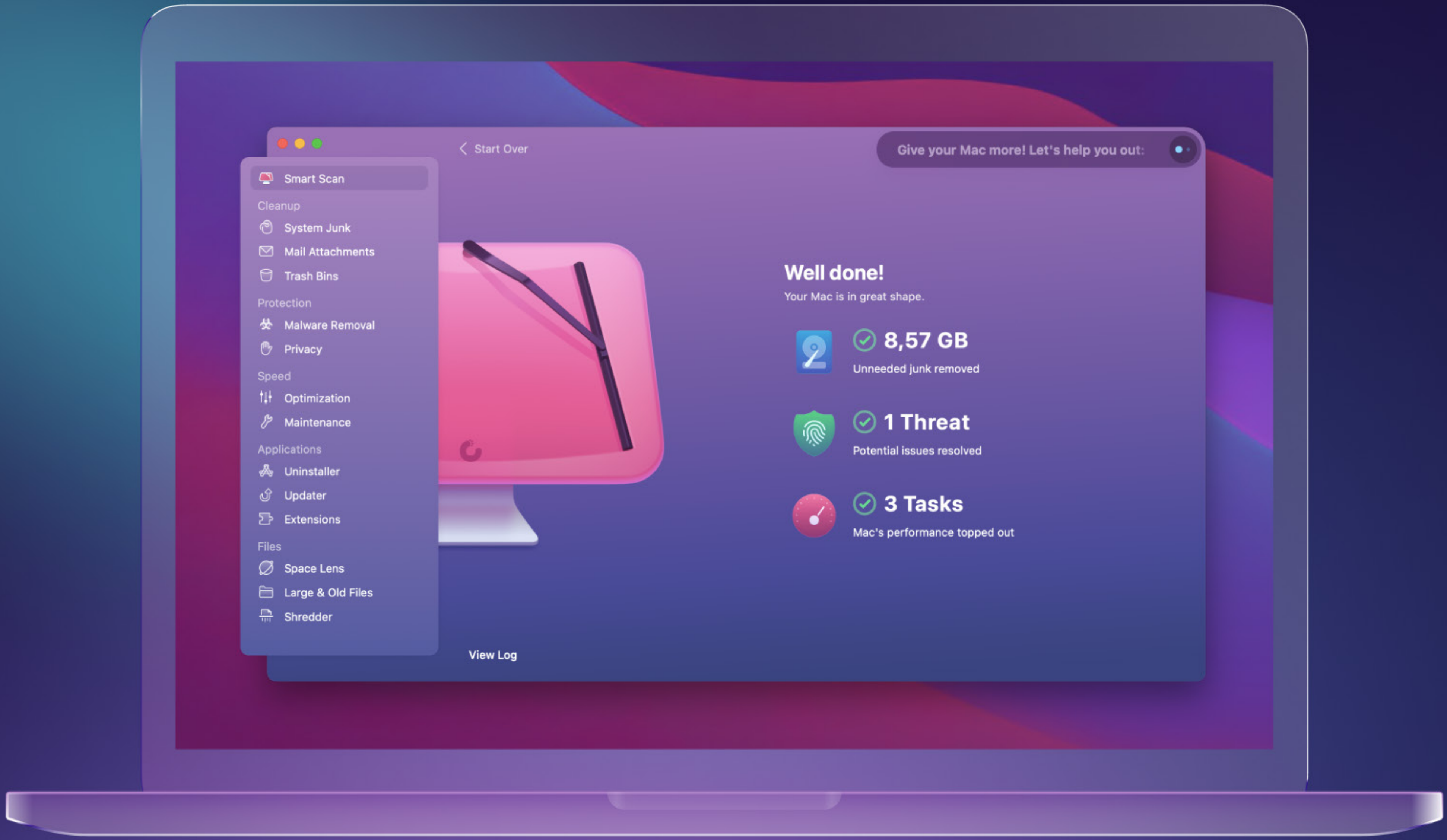

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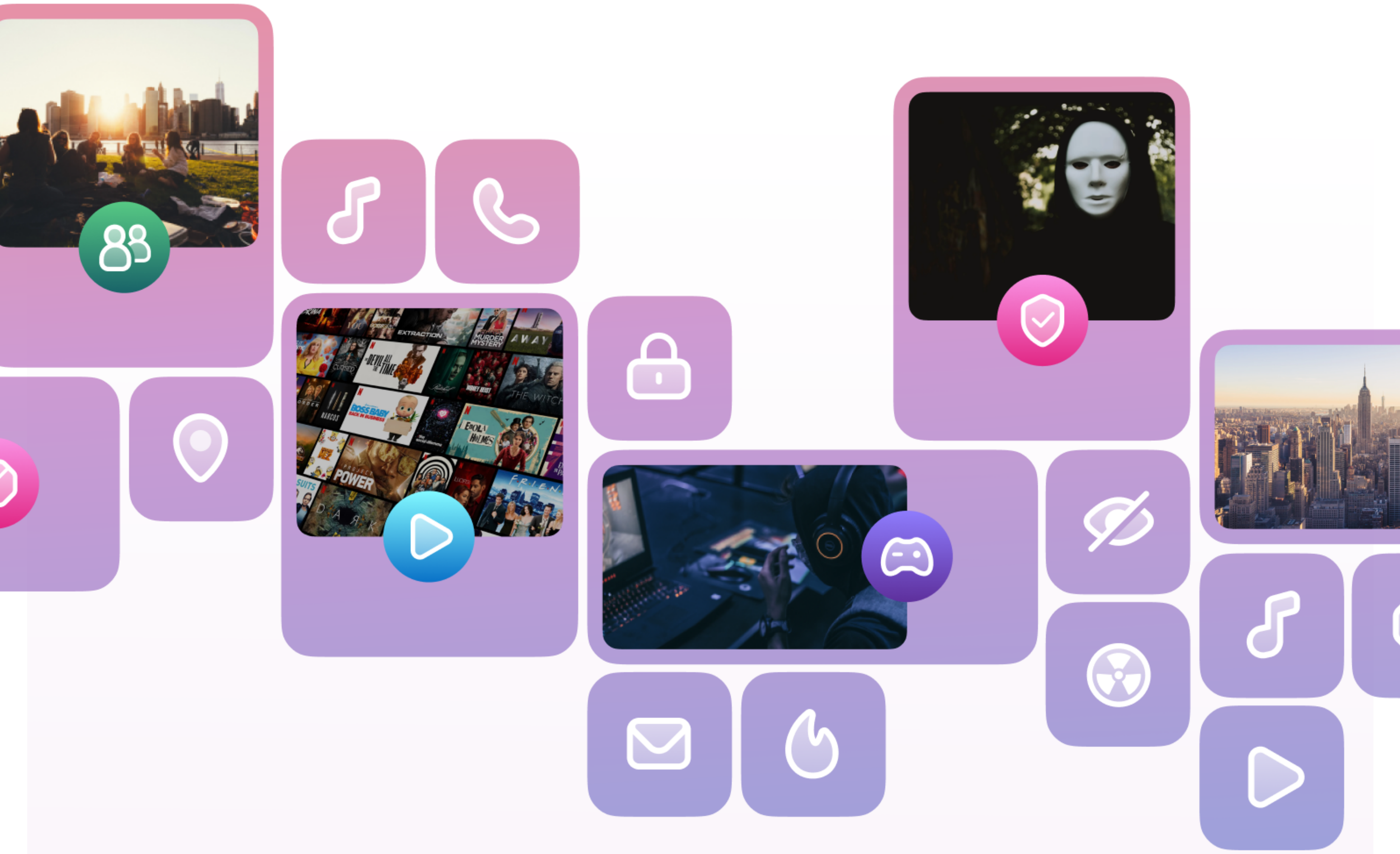

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Hermès

THE LUXURY COLLECTION
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HERMÈS-PARIS

Technology and fashion are increasingly converging, and the partnership between Apple and Hermès is testament to that. The Hermès Apple Watch collection exemplifies how two industry giants can merge cutting-edge technology with timeless craftsmanship to cater to an elite clientele seeking an A-class lifestyle and unlock new use cases for Apple's equipment.

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HERMÈS-PARIS

A LUXURY PARTNERSHIP

Since its inception in **2015, the Apple and Hermès collaboration** has redefined what a smartwatch can be, blending Hermès' heritage of artisanal excellence with Apple's technological prowess. The partnership was a bold move by **Apple to position its wearable as a luxury accessory,** appealing to consumers who value exclusivity and craftsmanship. The Gold edition, in particular, targets those who seek the ultimate in opulence, featuring premium materials like polished titanium or stainless steel paired with Hermès' iconic leather or woven bands. The **2024 Apple Watch Series 10 Hermès edition,** for instance, introduced a silver titanium finish exclusive to this collaboration, alongside custom watch faces like the whimsical Lucky Horse, which reflects Hermès' equestrian heritage.

What sets the Hermès edition apart is its attention to detail. The bands, crafted in Hermès' ateliers, are made from materials like waterproof textured knit or hand-stitched leather, embodying the brand's legacy of quality. The **2025 collection introduced new bands,** such as the Bleu Hydra En Mer for the Apple Watch Ultra 2, priced at $449, and the Toile H Single Tour in black, showcasing Hermès' nautical and equestrian themes. Exclusive **watch faces, such as the Hermès Radial** or the animated horse that sleeps when not viewed, add a layer of personalization that elevates the user experience. These elements transform the Apple Watch from a functional gadget into a fashion-forward accessory, appealing to those who prioritize aesthetics alongside utility.

The Gold edition, often paired with luxurious bands like the Noir/Gold Twill Jump Single

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Tour, caters to a clientele accustomed to high-end jewelry and accessories. While the core technology remains identical to standard Apple Watch models (like the Series 9 or 10), the Hermès edition commands a premium, starting at $1,249 and reaching up to $2,000 with a stainless steel link bracelet. This pricing reflects not just the materials but the prestige of the Hermès brand, making it a coveted item for luxury enthusiasts.

A SHIFTING LANDSCAPE

The Hermès Apple Watch thrives in a luxury industry that's evolving rapidly. According to Interbrand's 2024 report, **luxury brands like Hermès and Ferrari saw significant growth,** with valuations rising by 7% despite an industry-wide slowdown. Consumers are increasingly drawn to products that combine heritage with innovation, a niche where the Hermès Apple

HERMÈS PARIS
BRACELET
SWISS MADE

Watch excels. Unlike traditional luxury watches from brands like Rolex or Patek Philippe, which emphasize mechanical craftsmanship, the Hermès Apple Watch offers a hybrid of fashion, technology, and exclusivity. This positions it as a disruptor in the luxury watch market, appealing to younger, tech-savvy affluent consumers.

However, the luxury industry is not without challenges. **Apple's decision to phase out leather bands in 2023,** citing sustainability, forced Hermès to pivot to **alternative materials like knitted and woven nylon** for its bands. While Hermès continues to offer leather on its site, this shift highlights the tension between environmental responsibility and luxury. Consumers seeking sustainable luxury may appreciate Apple's move, but purists who associate Hermès with leather may feel disconnected.

HERMÈS
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Moreover, the luxury market is diversifying. Brands are no longer confined to single categories. **Ferrari, for instance, launched its first high-fashion collection in 2021** and a resort collection in 2024 [https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/resort-2025/ferrari], signaling its ambition to become a lifestyle brand. Similarly, **Nike has carved a niche in the athletic luxury space,** blending performance with style through collaborations and exclusive releases. Apple's success with Hermès suggests it could tap into these trends by expanding its partnerships to target specific lifestyle segments, enhancing its appeal in the competitive luxury market.

While the Hermès Apple Watch is a triumph, Apple's luxury portfolio could benefit from diversification. The company has already experimented with niche collaborations like the **Nike Apple Watch,** designed for runners with exclusive fitness-focused bands and watch faces. However, the Nike partnership has waned recently, with no new Nike-specific bands introduced in the 2025 Spring collection. Apple could revitalize this collaboration by developing a premium Nike+ edition, incorporating advanced biometric sensors for athletes or exclusive designs inspired by Nike's high-end sneakers. This would appeal to fitness enthusiasts who value performance and prestige, creating a luxury sports wearable that rivals the Hermès edition.

Another avenue for expansion lies in partnering with automotive luxury brands like Ferrari. Ferrari's foray into fashion and its reputation for precision engineering make it an ideal candidate for a collaboration. Imagine a Ferrari Apple Watch edition with a carbon-fiber case, **inspired by Ferrari's hypercars,** and watch faces that

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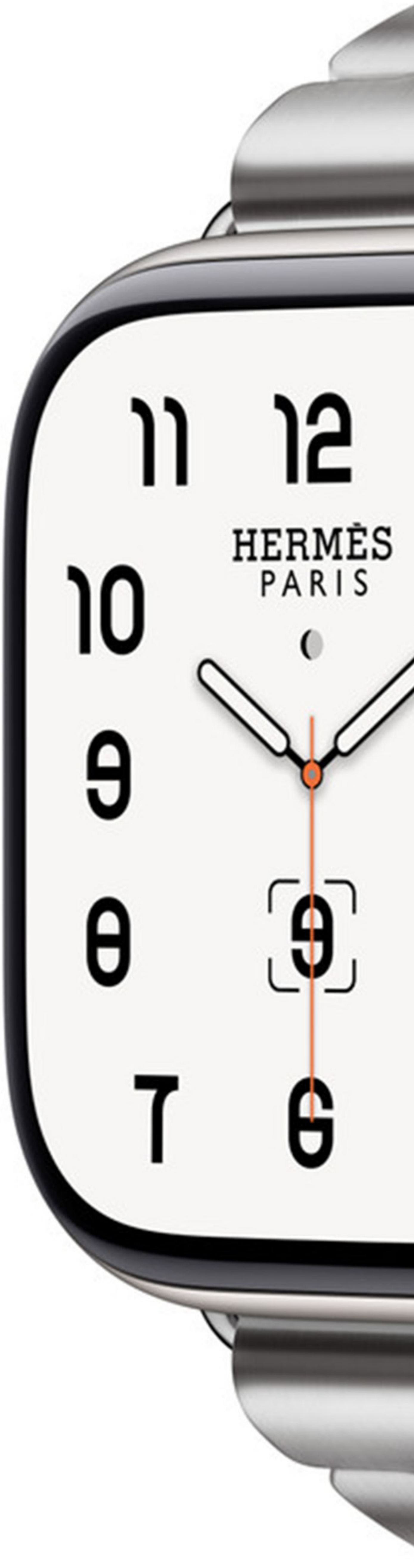
mimic the brand's iconic dashboard gauges. Such a product could target car enthusiasts and collectors, leveraging Ferrari's growth in the luxury sector. A Ferrari edition could also integrate features like car-key functionality or telemetry data for track days, blending lifestyle with utility in a way that resonates with Ferrari's clientele. Beyond specific partnerships, **Apple could explore modular luxury accessories to enhance its portfolio.** For instance, introducing customizable case engravings or limited-edition bezels crafted from precious metals could appeal to consumers seeking bespoke products. Collaborating with jewelry brands like Tiffany & Co. for diamond-encrusted bands or watch faces could further elevate the Apple Watch's status as a luxury item. These initiatives would allow Apple to cater to diverse tastes within the market and ultimately shift more stock.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

Expanding Apple's luxury portfolio is not without risks. The company must balance exclusivity with accessibility to maintain its broad appeal. The Hermès Apple Watch, priced at a premium, remains a niche product, with some critics arguing it offers insufficient differentiation from standard models beyond aesthetics. New partnerships, like a Ferrari edition, would need to deliver unique features, whether in design, materials, or functionality, to justify their cost. **Over-saturation with too many luxury editions** could also dilute the brand's prestige, a concern raised when **Hermès briefly removed its Apple Watch offerings from its website in 2023,** sparking rumors of a potential end to the partnership.

Sustainability is another hurdle. Apple's commitment to eliminating leather and reducing its carbon footprint aligns with growing consumer demand for eco-friendly products. Still, it risks alienating traditional luxury buyers who associate premium goods with materials like calfskin. Future collaborations could address this by exploring innovative, sustainable materials, like lab-grown leather or recycled carbon fiber, that maintain a luxurious feel while adhering to Apple's environmental goals. Finally, Apple must navigate the competitive landscape. Traditional luxury watchmakers increasingly incorporate innovative features, while brands like **Samsung and Garmin offer high-end wearables at lower prices.** To stay ahead, Apple needs to leverage its ecosystem, integrating the Apple Watch more seamlessly with iPhones, Macs, and services like Apple Fitness+, while ensuring luxury editions offer unmatched craftsmanship.

The Hermès Apple Watch Gold edition is a testament to Apple's ability to transcend its tech roots and compete in the luxury arena. By combining Hermès' artisanal heritage with its innovation, Apple has created a product that resonates with those seeking something more. However, Apple must continue to innovate and diversify to solidify its position in the industry.



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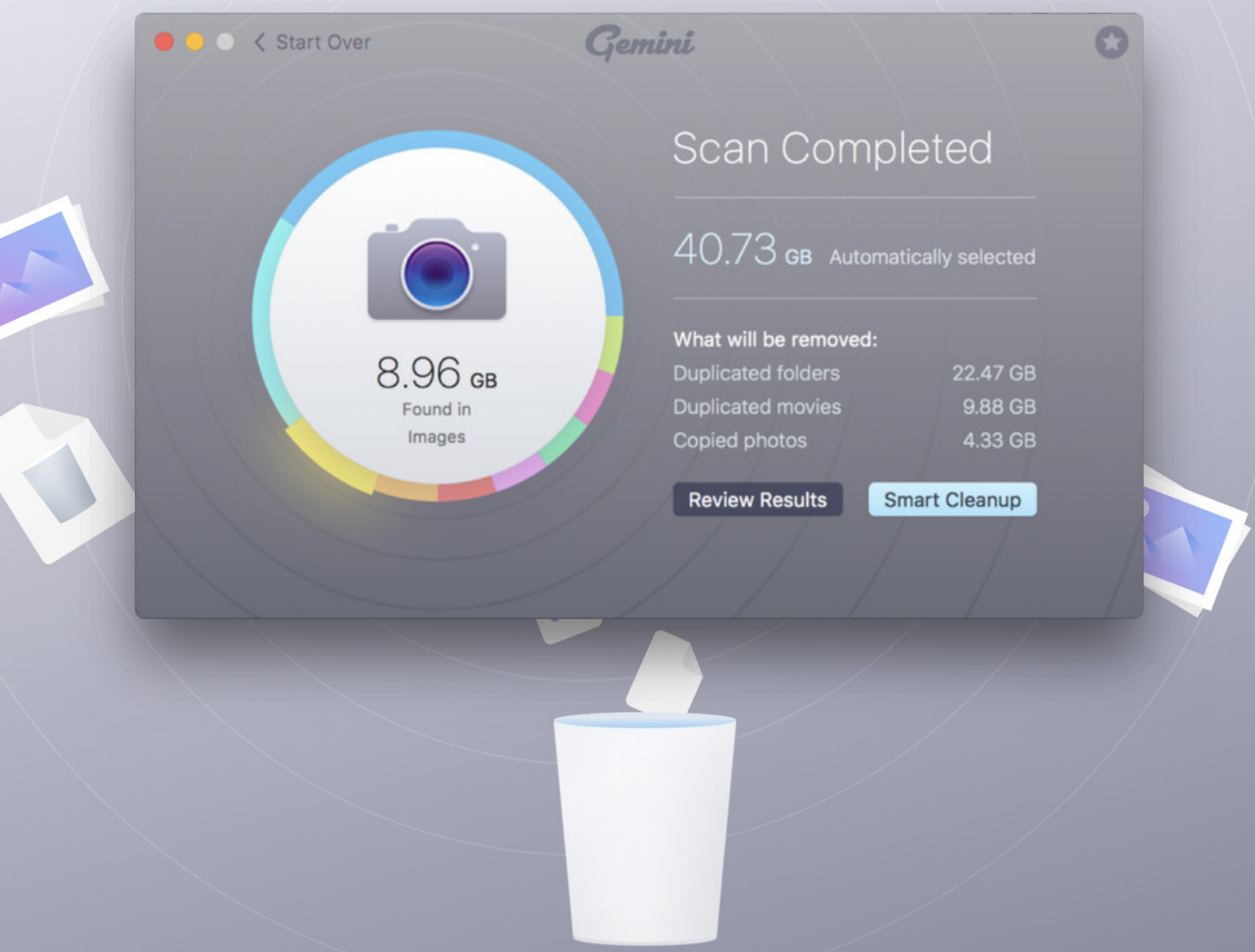
As the luxury industry evolves, Apple is uniquely positioned to lead the charge, blending technology, fashion, and exclusivity in ways that redefine what a wearable can be. The Hermès Apple Watch is just the beginning, a golden foundation for a future where Apple keeps pace with luxury trends and sets them.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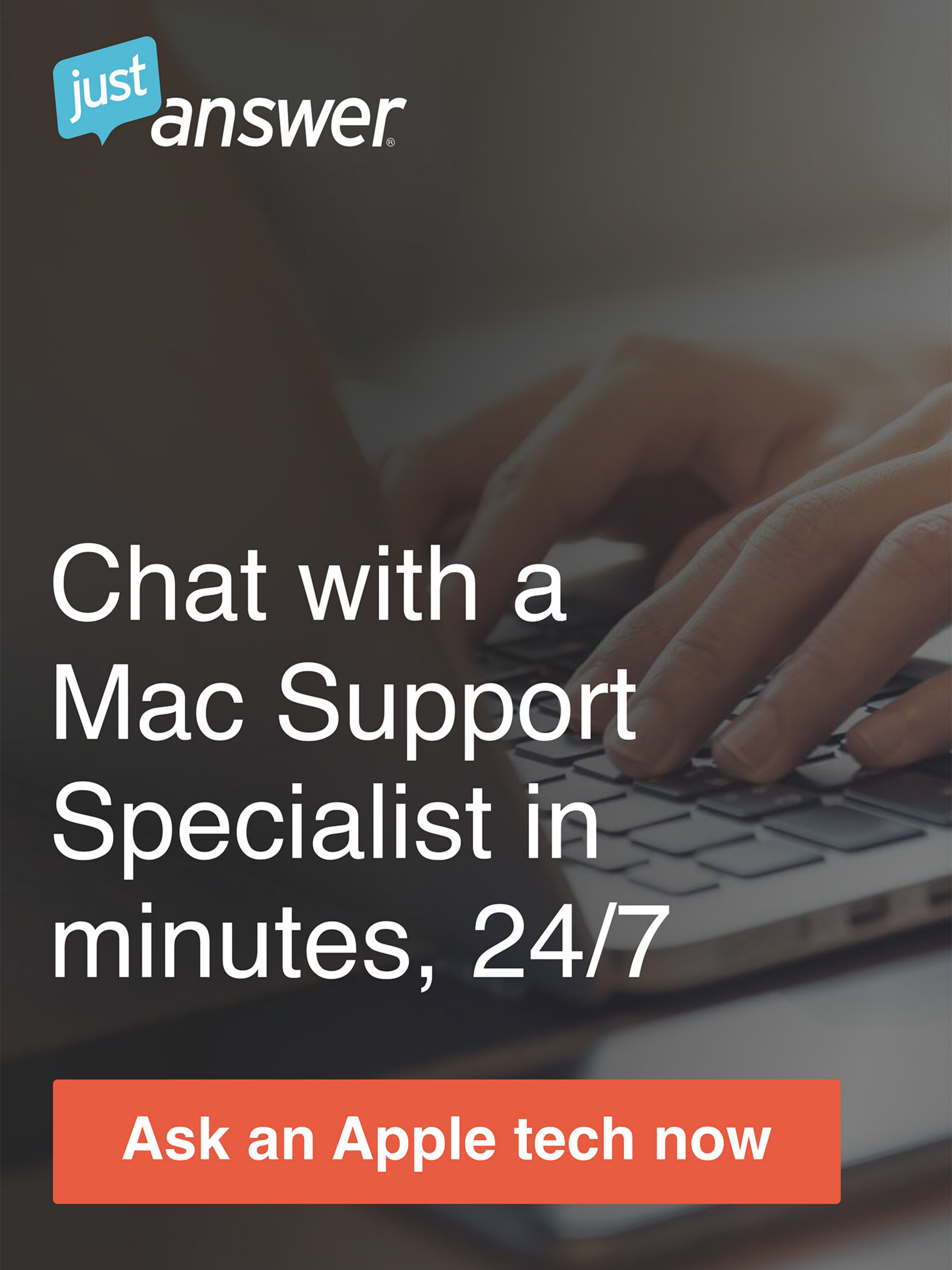

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IOS 18.5 EXPANDS CARRIER SATELLITE SUPPORT TO IPHONE 13 MODELS

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Apple's upcoming iOS 18.5 update, set for release next week, will enable carrier-provided satellite connectivity, such as T-Mobile's Starlink service, on iPhone 13 models, including the iPhone 13, iPhone 13 mini, iPhone 13 Pro, and iPhone 13 Pro Max, as reported this week by MacRumors.

The feature allows users to send text messages in areas without cellular or Wi-Fi coverage, enhancing connectivity for T-Mobile subscribers with compatible devices.

For iPhone users, carriers, and the tech industry, this expansion broadens access to satellite-based communication, previously limited to iPhone 14 and newer models, addressing connectivity challenges in remote regions.

T-Mobile's Starlink service, part of a beta program launched in December 2024, uses SpaceX's direct-to-cell satellites to provide texting capabilities, with plans for data and voice support in the future.

The iOS 18.5 update integrates this service seamlessly, requiring no additional apps and automatically connecting when users are out of terrestrial network range, displaying "T-Mobile SpaceX" and a satellite icon.

The update builds on Apple's existing satellite features, introduced with the iPhone 14 in 2022 via Globalstar, and reflects growing carrier adoption of satellite networks, including partnerships like Verizon with Skylo and AT&T with AST SpaceMobile.

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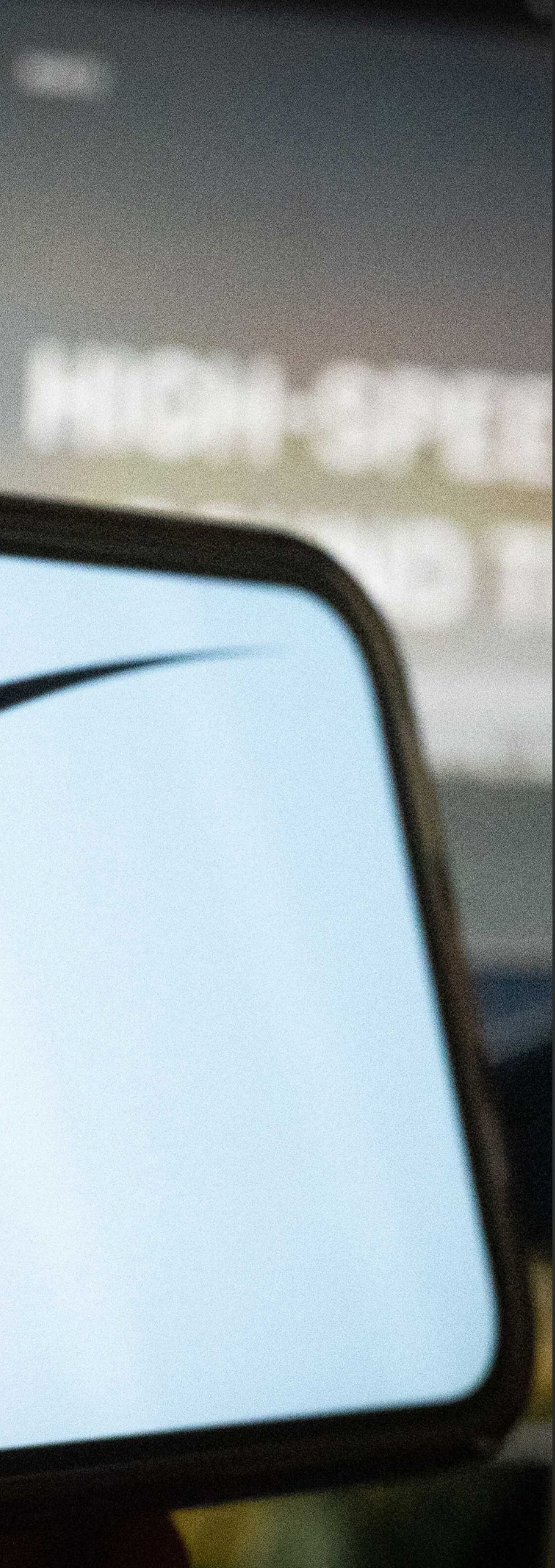
STARLINK



SATELLITE CONNECTIVITY FOR IPHONE 13

The iOS 18.5 update extends carrier satellite support to all iPhone 13 models, enabling T-Mobile subscribers with these devices to access Starlink's texting service in areas lacking cellular coverage.

Previously, only iPhone 14, 15, and 16 models supported this feature, introduced in iOS 18.3 for T-Mobile's beta program. Users with an unlocked, satellite-optimized iPhone 13 and a postpaid T-Mobile voice plan can join the beta, which is free and requires registration on T-Mobile's website, as detailed on the carrier's support page.

The service activates automatically, showing "T-Mobile SpaceX" and a satellite icon when connected, with no need to point the phone at the sky, unlike Apple's Globalstar-based service, per Bloomberg.

T-MOBILE AND STARLINK BETA PROGRAM

T-Mobile partnered with SpaceX in 2022 to offer Starlink's direct-to-cell service, launching a beta in December 2024 initially for Samsung devices, with iPhone support added in iOS 18.3. The beta, open to select users, allows texting in remote U.S. areas, including Puerto Rico and parts of southern Alaska, where traditional towers are unavailable.

Messages may take longer to send, with notifications for failed attempts, and users can provide feedback via the T-Life app, as outlined on T-Mobile's website.

The service, free during the beta, will cost $15 per month for most T-Mobile plans after July 2025, with a $10 early adopter discount until February 2026, and $20 per month for non-T-Mobile users, per CNET.

Eligible devices must support T-Mobile's 1900 MHz (band 25) spectrum.

CARRIER AND DEVICE REQUIREMENTS

To use T-Mobile's Starlink service, iPhone 13 users need an unlocked, satellite-optimized device and a T-Mobile postpaid voice plan. Compatible devices include iPhone 13 models, iPhone 14 and later, select Samsung Galaxy models (e.g., S23, S24), and Google Pixel 9, as listed on T-Mobile's support page. Users can check if their phone is unlocked in Settings > General > About > Carrier Lock, where "No SIM restrictions" indicates compatibility.

Other carriers, like Verizon with Skylo and AT&T with AST SpaceMobile, are developing satellite services, but Verizon's option is not yet iPhone-compatible, and AT&T's is in testing, per MacRumors. The iOS 18.5 update prepares iPhone 13 models for these emerging carrier options, expanding satellite access.

APPLE'S EXISTING SATELLITE FEATURES

Apple introduced satellite connectivity with the iPhone 14 in 2022, partnering with Globalstar to offer Emergency SOS, roadside assistance, and messaging without cellular or Wi-Fi coverage.

This service, free for two years post-activation, requires users to point the phone at the sky and is available in multiple countries, unlike T-Mobile's U.S.-focused Starlink beta.

(PRODUCT

The iOS 18 Connection Assistant, introduced in 2024, guides users to connect via Globalstar satellites, accessible in Control Center or Settings, per Apple's support page.

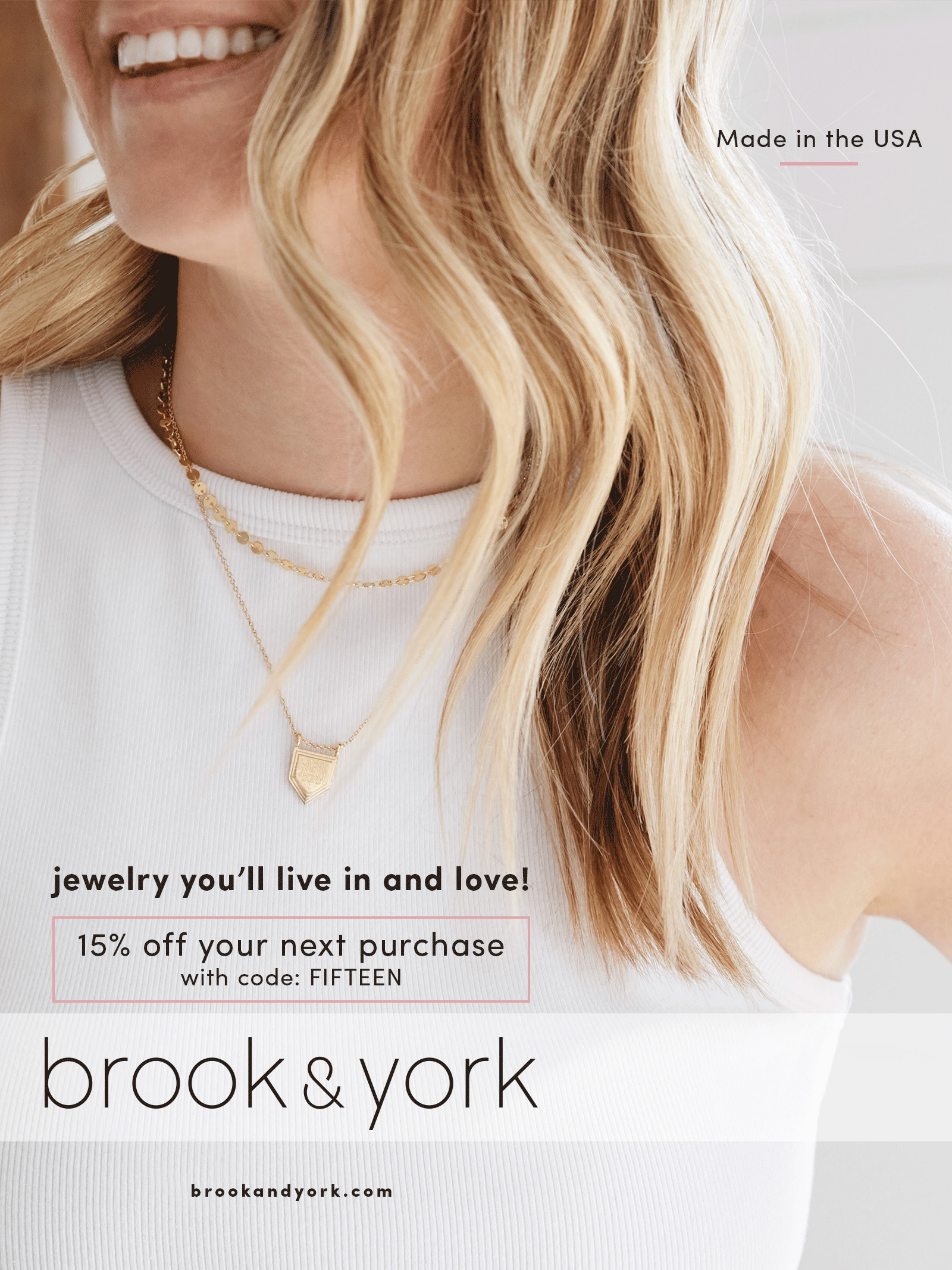
iPhone 13 users with iOS 18.5 can use both Globalstar's service and carrier satellite options like T-Mobile Starlink when available, switching automatically based on network conditions, as detailed by 9to5Mac.

USER OPT-OUT AND BETA LIMITATIONS

T-Mobile's Starlink beta requires manual registration and is limited to select users, with no automatic enrollment, countering social media claims that iOS 18.3 forced Starlink access. Users can disable satellite connectivity in Settings > Cellular > T-Mobile > Satellite, ensuring control over the feature, as noted by TechRadar.

The beta, covering text messaging only, operates in most outdoor U.S. areas with a clear sky view, with performance varying by location and user volume, according to T-Mobile's support page.

The service's expansion to iPhone 13 models via iOS 18.5 reflects T-Mobile's plan to support most modern smartphones by the 2025 commercial launch, as stated by Mike Katz, T-Mobile's president of marketing.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GEARS OF WAR: RELOADED BRINGS XBOX CLASSIC TO PLAYSTATION 5

Microsoft has announced Gears of War: Reloaded, a remastered version of the original 2006 Gears of War game, set for release on August 26, 2025, across PlayStation 5, Xbox Series X|S, PC, and Xbox Game Pass, as revealed this week.

This marks the first time a Gears of War title, previously an Xbox exclusive, will launch on Sony's platform, continuing Microsoft's shift toward multiplatform releases.

For gamers, developers, and industry observers, the move expands the reach of the iconic third-person shooter, known for its intense combat and cooperative gameplay, to a new audience while updating it for modern hardware.

Developed by The Coalition with Sumo Interactive and Disbelief, Gears of War: Reloaded features 4K resolution, 120 FPS multiplayer, and cross-play support, priced at $39.99.

The remaster includes all content from the 2015 Gears of War: Ultimate Edition, with enhanced visuals and audio, and offers a free upgrade for digital owners of the Ultimate Edition purchased before May 5, 2025.

The launch, ahead of the franchise's 20th anniversary in 2026, aims to celebrate its legacy while introducing the series to PlayStation players, following Microsoft's recent multiplatform releases like Forza Horizon 5.

REMASTERED FEATURES AND VISUAL UPGRADES

Gears of War: Reloaded delivers 4K resolution with Dolby Vision HDR, 60 FPS in campaign mode, and 120 FPS in multiplayer, supporting Variable Refresh Rate (VRR) and 3D audio. The game includes remastered textures, improved shadows, reflections, and post-processing effects, with no loading times during the campaign.

These enhancements build on the Gears of War: Ultimate Edition, optimizing the original 2006 title for current-generation consoles and PCs, as detailed in Microsoft's Xbox Wire announcement.

The remaster retains the full campaign, supporting two-player co-op, and multiplayer with up to eight players, including all maps,

modes, and downloadable content from the Ultimate Edition, such as the bonus campaign act and unlockable characters.

MULTIPLATFORM RELEASE AND CROSS-PLAY

The game will launch simultaneously on PlayStation 5, Xbox Series X|S, Xbox PC, Xbox Cloud Gaming, and Steam, marking a historic debut for the Gears of War franchise on Sony's platform. Microsoft's multiplatform strategy, seen in earlier 2025 releases like Forza Horizon 5 and Indiana Jones and the Great Circle, extends to Reloaded, which supports cross-play and cross-progression across all platforms. Players can team up or compete between Xbox, PlayStation, and PC, with campaign and multiplayer progress carrying over, requiring a Microsoft account for full functionality.

Sony's PlayStation team promoted the announcement, a notable shift from the franchise's Xbox-exclusive history, as reported by PCMag. The $39.99 price applies across platforms, with day-one access via Game Pass Ultimate and PC Game Pass.

FREE UPGRADE FOR ULTIMATE EDITION OWNERS

Microsoft is offering Gears of War: Reloaded as a free upgrade for players who purchased the digital version of Gears of War: Ultimate Edition before 4:00 PM UTC on May 5, 2025. Eligible users will receive a redemption code via Xbox direct message before the launch, as confirmed in the Xbox Wire post. This gesture targets long-time fans, acknowledging the franchise's legacy, which began as an Xbox 360 exclusive in 2006.

The Ultimate Edition, priced at $19.99 on the Microsoft Store, includes the original game's content, which Reloaded enhances with modernized visuals and performance improvements, ensuring no additional cost for prior owners.

DEVELOPMENT AND FRANCHISE LEGACY

The Coalition, the primary developer behind the Gears of War series since Microsoft acquired it from Epic Games in 2014, led the Reloaded project with support from Sumo Interactive and Disbelief.

Studio head Mike Crump described the remaster as a celebration of the franchise's stories and community, ahead of its 20th anniversary in 2026.

The original game, known for its cover-based shooting and cooperative gameplay, sold over 22 million units across its series by 2016, per industry data.

The remaster follows rumors of a broader Gears of War collection, though only the first game is confirmed for now, with Microsoft hinting at further announcements for the anniversary, as noted by Metro News.

COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE AND MARKET REACTION

Microsoft's decision to release Gears of War: Reloaded on PlayStation 5 aligns with its strategy to broaden first-party titles, following Forza Horizon 5 and other 2025 multiplatform launches.

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The move has sparked varied reactions, with some Xbox fans expressing disappointment over the loss of exclusivity, while PlayStation users, like those on social media, celebrated access to a franchise previously unavailable on Sony consoles, as reported by Tom's Guide.

The game's 4K visuals and cross-play features compete with remasters like Horizon Zero Dawn Remastered, emphasizing high-performance gaming.

Sony's promotion of the title, alongside Microsoft's low-key announcement without a reveal trailer, suggests a cautious approach to multiplatform releases, as observed by Metro News.

The remaster's launch precedes Gears of War: E-Day, a prequel with no confirmed release date, indicating Microsoft's ongoing investment in the series.

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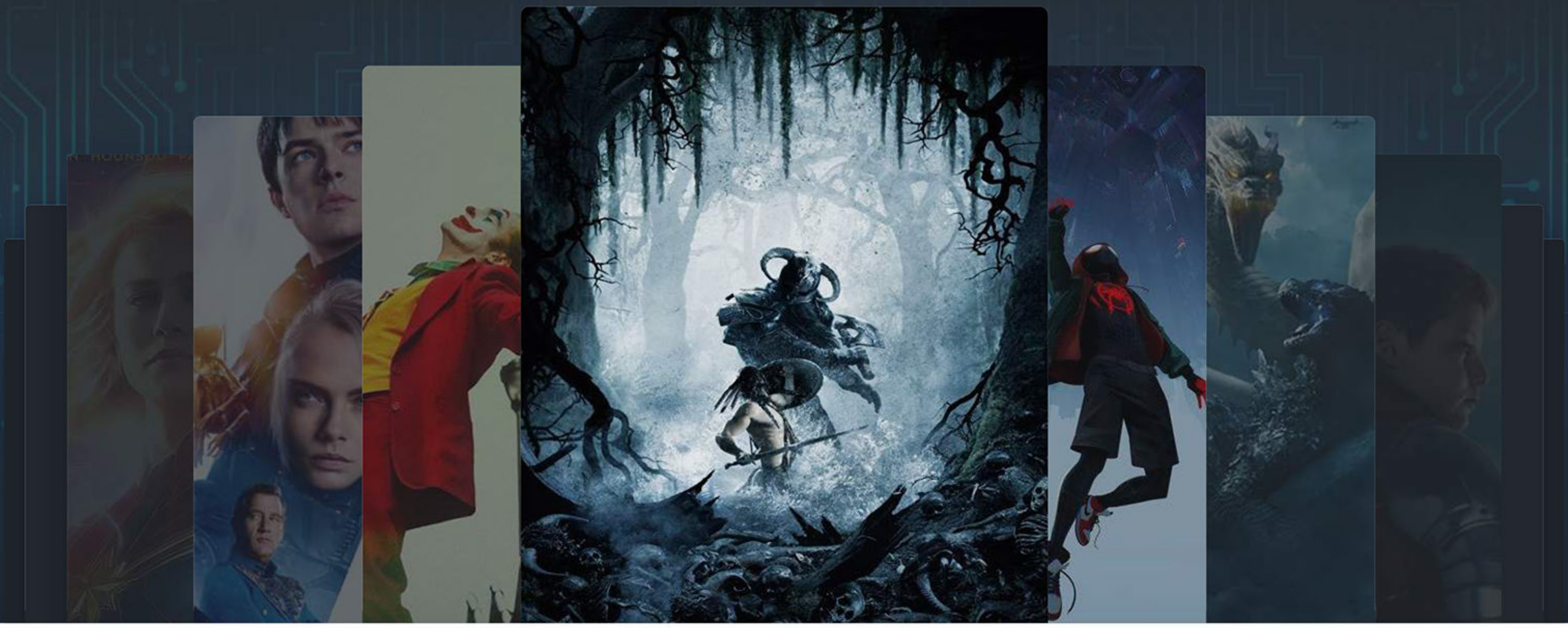

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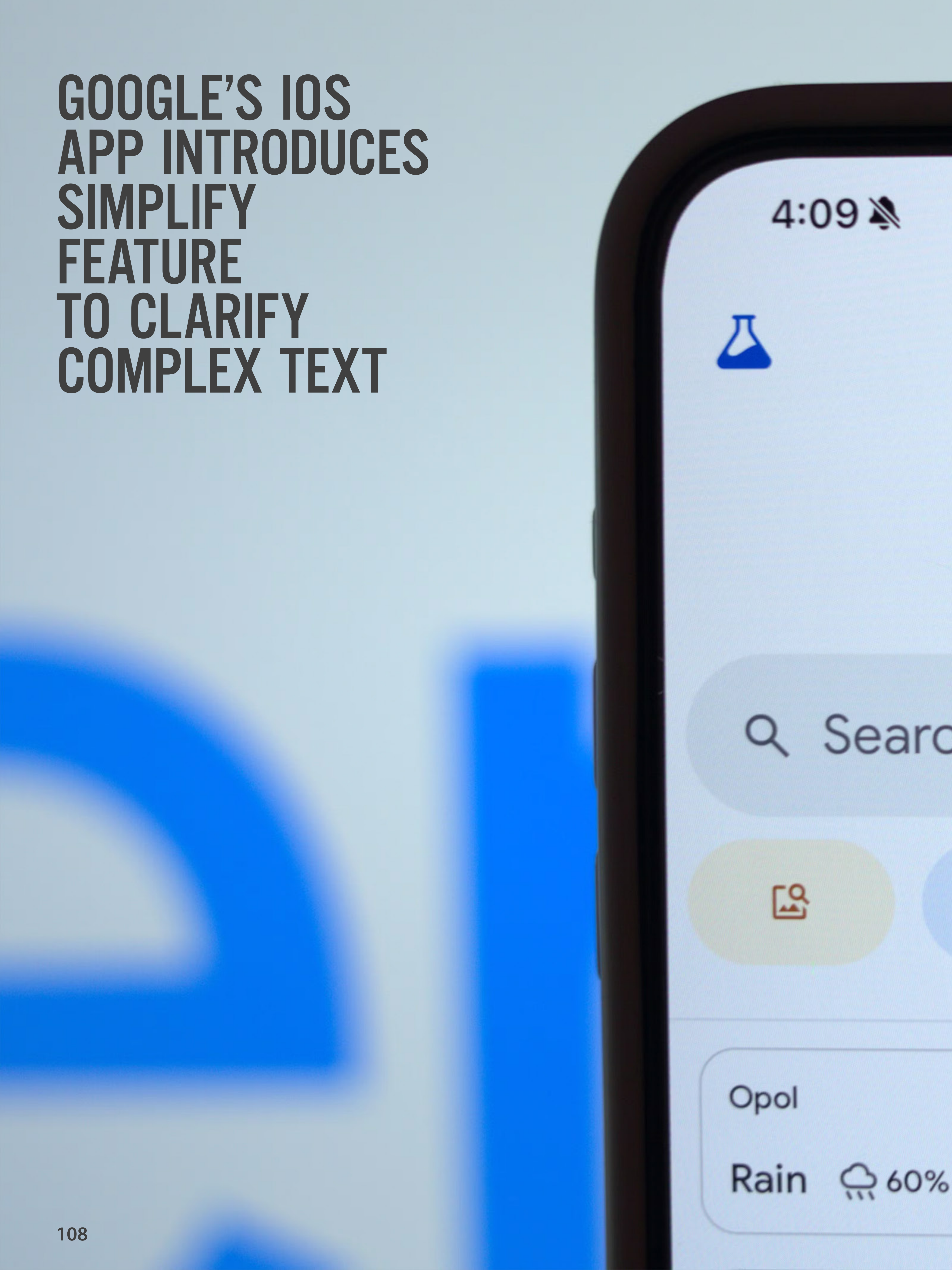
GOOGLE'S IOS APP INTRODUCES SIMPLIFY FEATURE TO CLARIFY COMPLEX TEXT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Google has launched a new feature called Simplify for its iOS app, enabling users to transform complex or technical web text into clearer, more understandable language using artificial intelligence, as announced this week.

The tool, powered by the Gemini AI model and developed by Google Research, allows iPhone users to highlight jargon-heavy text on a webpage within the app and generate a simplified version without leaving the page.

For students, professionals, and casual readers, Simplify addresses the challenge of deciphering dense content, making information more accessible across fields like medicine, law, and technology.

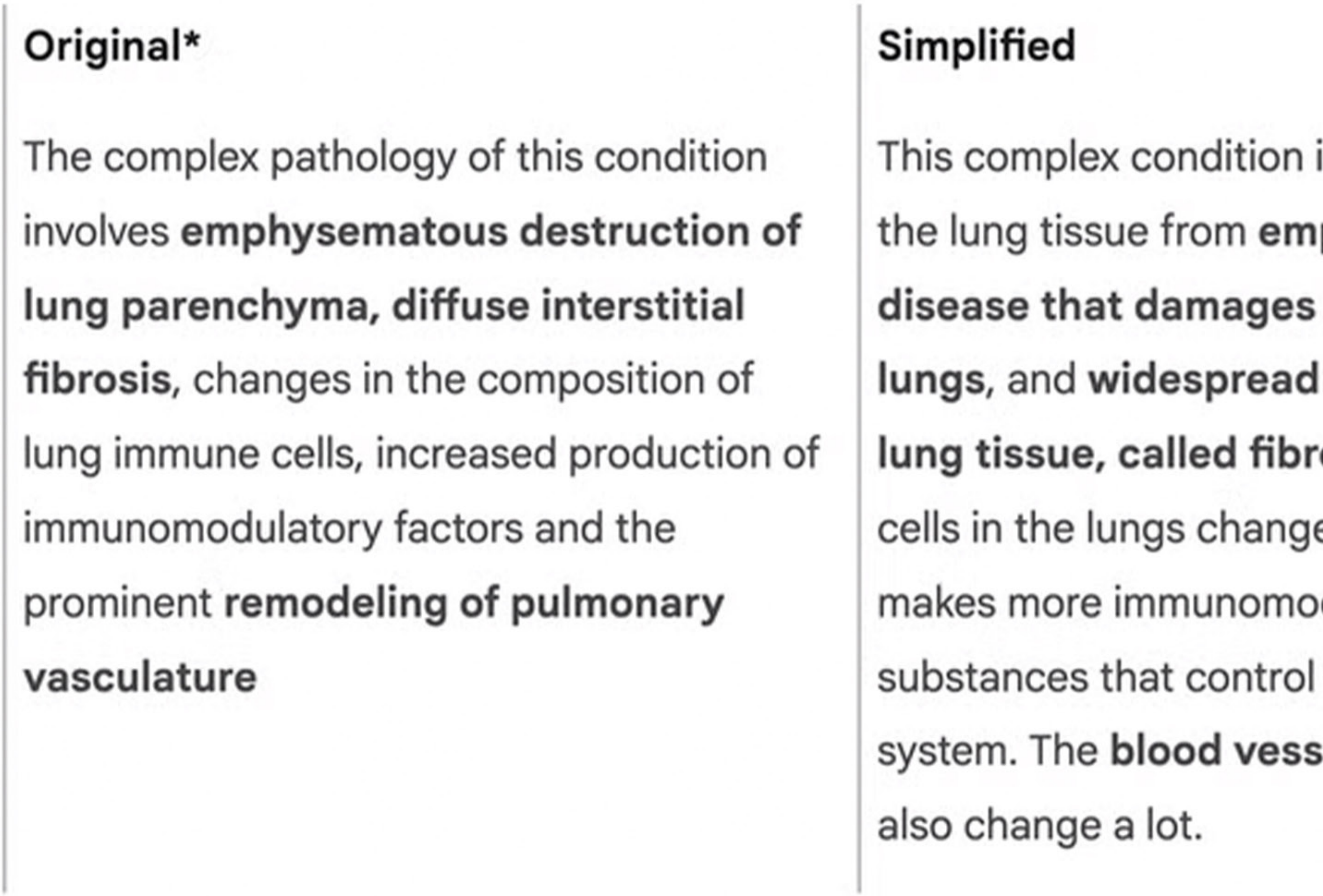
To use Simplify, users select text on a webpage in the Google app and tap a "Simplify" icon, prompting a pop-up with a rephrased, digestible explanation that retains key details. Google's testing showed that simplified text improved user comprehension and retention compared to original content, as reported in a company blog post.

The feature, rolling out to iOS users this week, is currently exclusive to the Google app's built-in browser, with no immediate plans for Android or desktop Chrome versions, according to a Google spokesperson.

SIMPLIFY FEATURE FUNCTIONALITY

Simplify enables users to highlight any text on a webpage viewed in the Google app's browser, such as medical journals or legal documents, and tap a "Simplify" icon from the menu.

A pop-up window displays a rephrased version of the selected text, breaking down



Original*

The complex pathology of this condition involves **emphysematous destruction of lung parenchyma, diffuse interstitial fibrosis**, changes in the composition of lung immune cells, increased production of immunomodulatory factors and the prominent **remodeling of pulmonary vasculature**

Simplified

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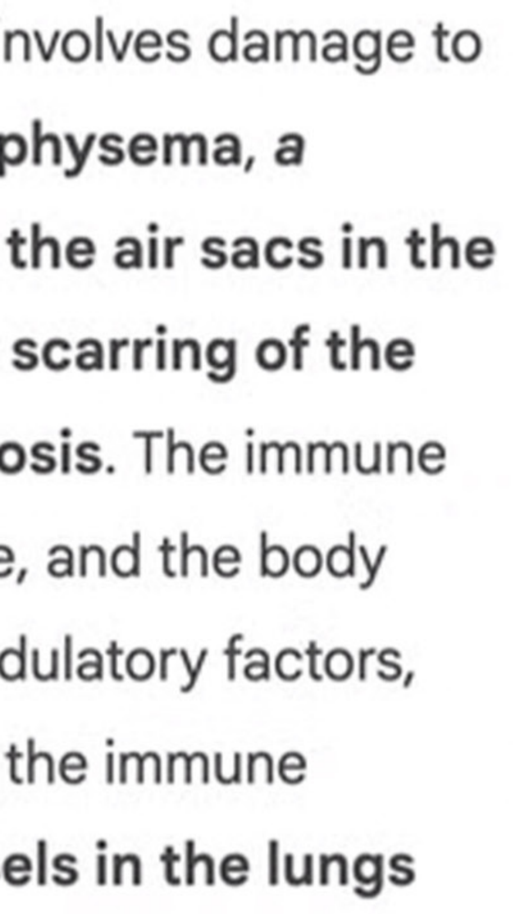

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terms like "emphysema" (damage to lung air sacs) or "fibrosis" (lung tissue scarring) into plain language.

The feature preserves essential meaning while enhancing clarity, as detailed in Google's announcement.

The tool appears alongside options like Search and Translate in the app's "More actions" panel, ensuring seamless integration without requiring users to navigate away from the page.

GEMINI AI AND PROMPT REFINEMENT

The Simplify feature is powered by Gemini 1.5 models, designed for high-fidelity text simplification, as outlined by Google Research. Unlike summarizing or explaining, the AI paraphrases complex ideas accurately, avoiding errors or omissions. The novel prompt refinement approach ensures the simplified text maintains nuance and detail, tested across domains like biology, finance, and computer science, where users found it significantly more helpful than original text, per Google's blog.

This application of Gemini distinguishes Simplify from third-party tools like OpenAI's ChatGPT, which may require separate apps or tabs for similar tasks, keeping users within Google's ecosystem.

USER ACCESS AND INTERFACE

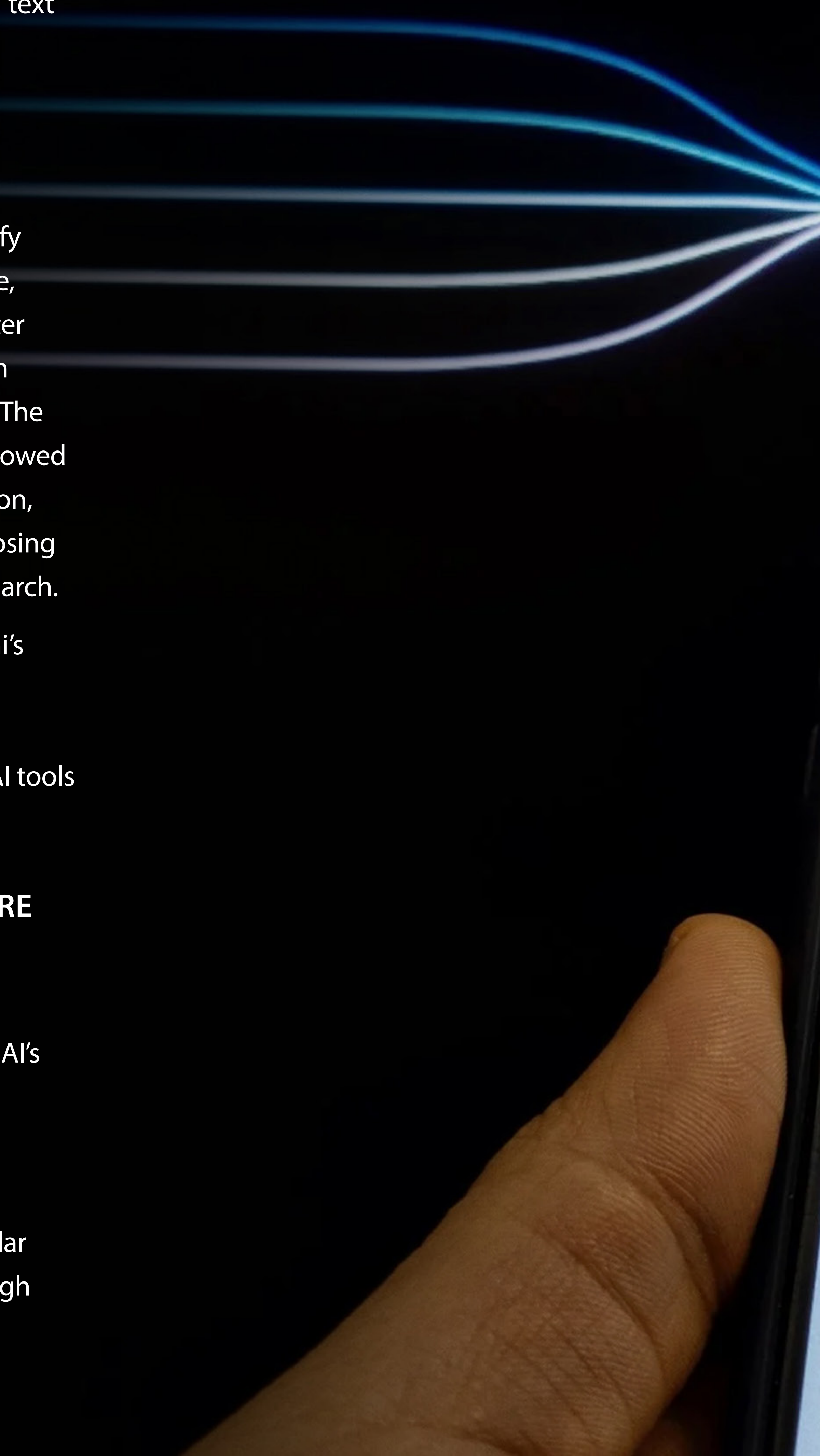
To access Simplify, users open a webpage in the Google app on iOS, highlight jargon-heavy text, and select the "Simplify" option from the context menu. The simplified text appears in a dismissible pop-up, allowing users to continue reading without interruption. The feature is available to all iOS users starting this week, with no additional cost or subscription required, as confirmed by Google's announcement.

The interface is designed for ease of use, integrating directly into the app's browser, though it lacks manual navigation or search functions, limiting its scope to highlighted text on the current page.

TESTING AND PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES

Google conducted research testing Simplify across complex texts in fields like medicine, law, and aerospace, finding that users better understood and retained information from simplified versions compared to originals. The testing, detailed in the company's blog, showed significant improvements in comprehension, particularly for technical jargon, without losing critical details, as reported by Google Research.

The feature's performance relies on Gemini's ability to rephrase accurately, ensuring simplified explanations remain true to the source, addressing a common issue with AI tools that may oversimplify or distort meaning.



COMPETITIVE CONTEXT AND FUTURE PLANS

Simplify joins Google's suite of AI-driven tools, competing with platforms like OpenAI's ChatGPT, which offers text explanation capabilities but requires separate access.

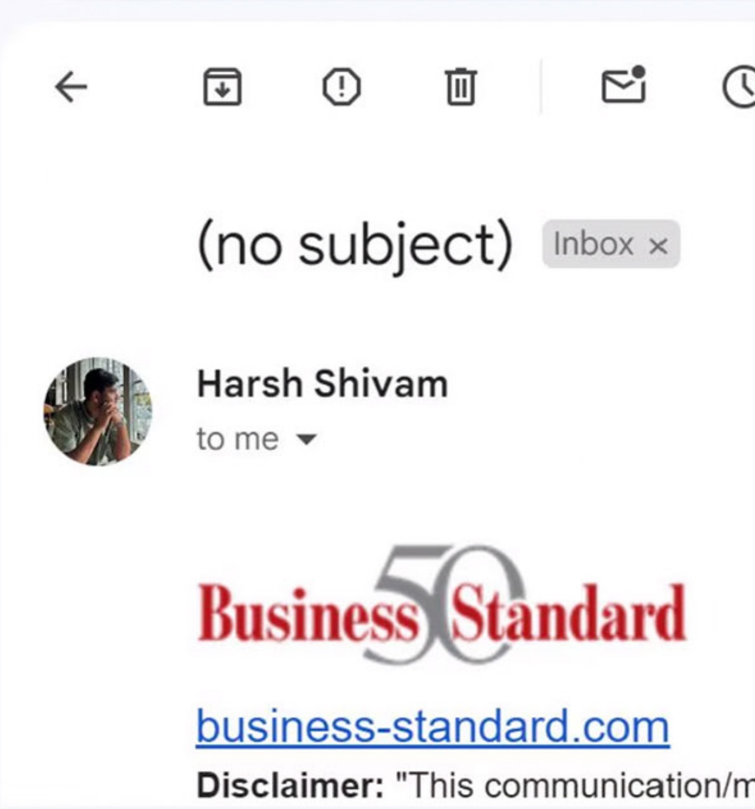
Apple's iOS 18.4 Visual Intelligence and WhatsApp's Private Processing reflect similar trends toward integrated AI features, though

Gemini
Gemini
Google

Simplify's in-app text simplification is unique to Google's browser.

When asked about expanding Simplify to Android or Chrome, Google spokesperson Jennifer Kutz stated no plans exist yet, but the company is exploring broader applications, as noted in The Verge.

The feature's iOS exclusivity aligns with Google's strategy to enhance its app's utility, potentially retaining users within its ecosystem for complex topic research.



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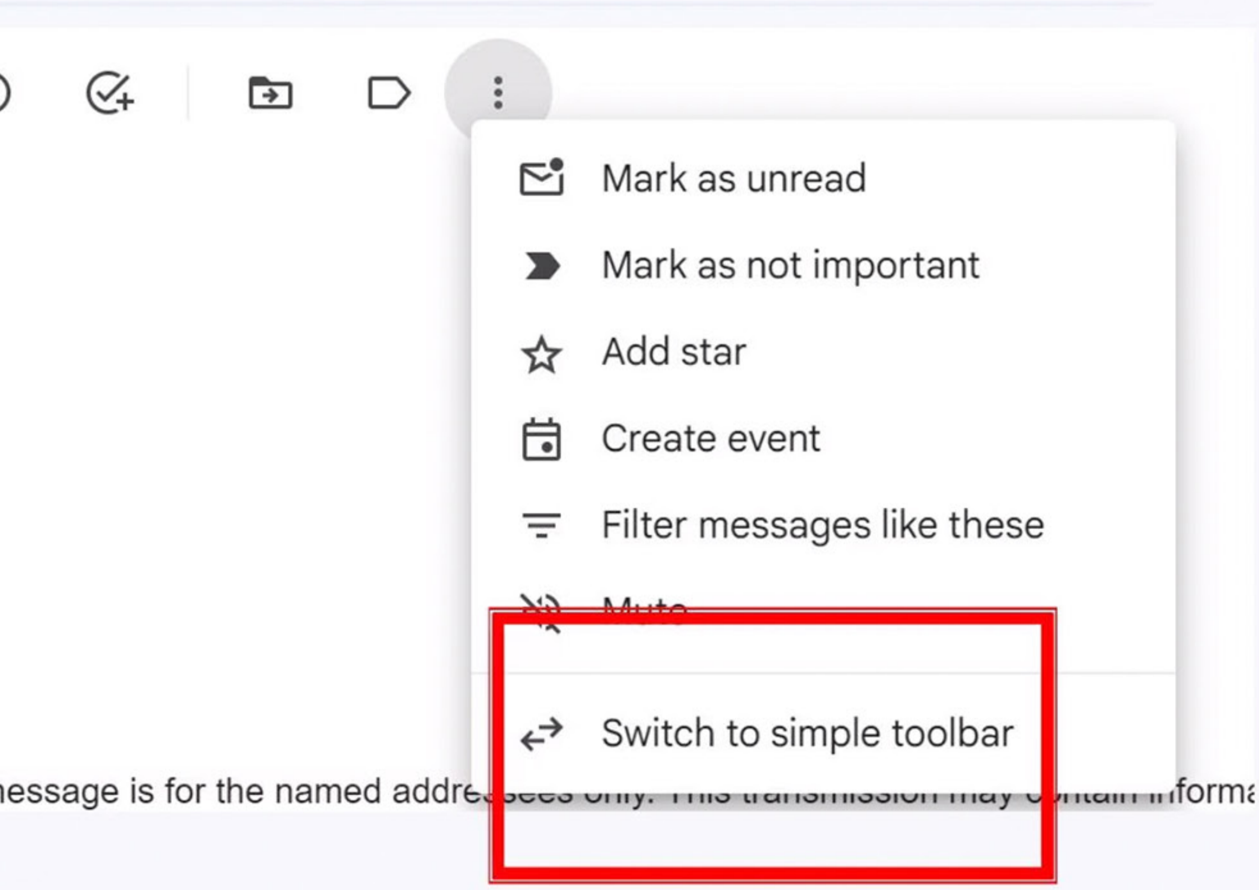
Simple Toolbar

Advanced Toolbar



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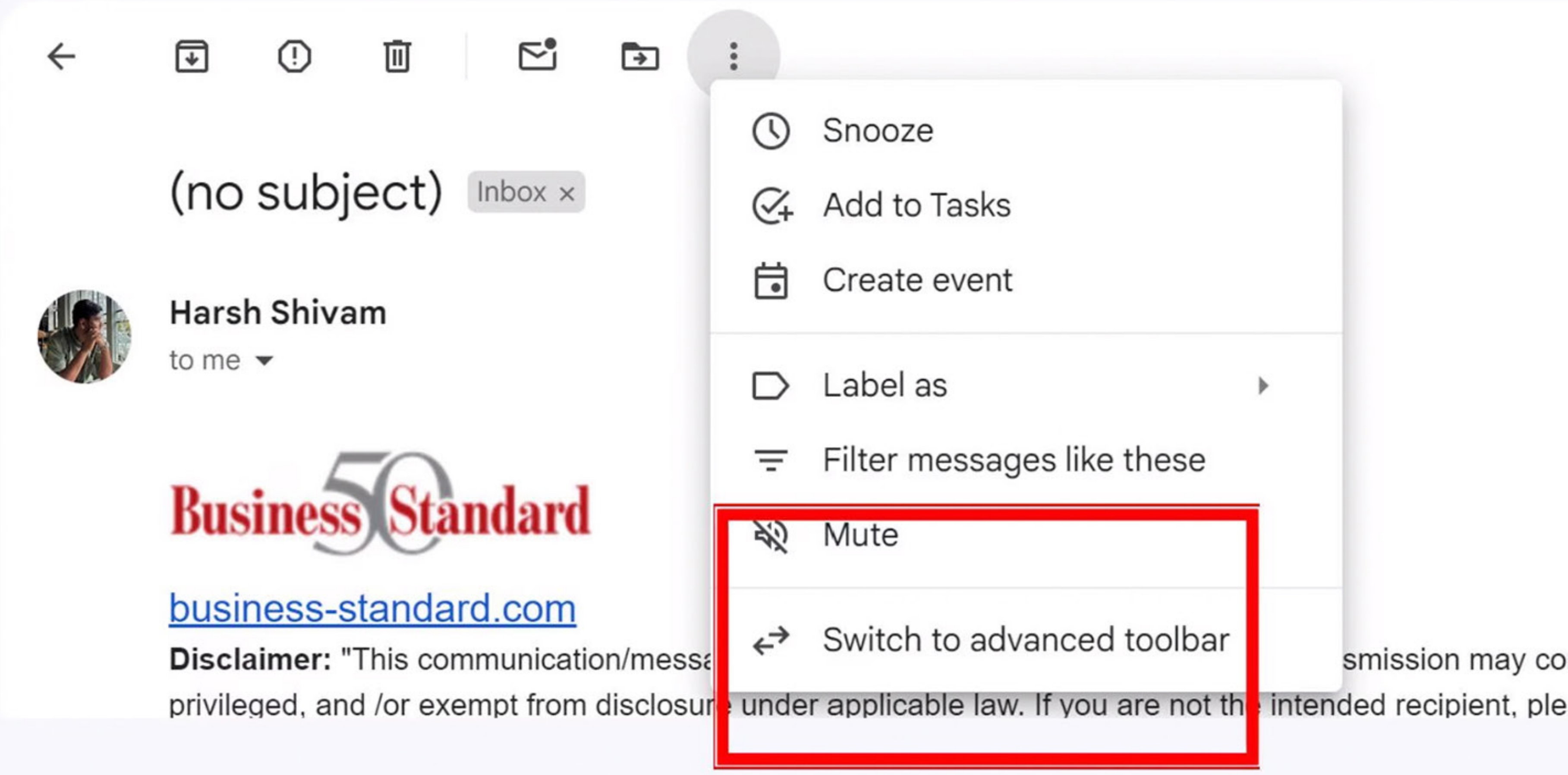
Switch to simple toolbar



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OPENAI MAINTAINS NONPROFIT CONTROL IN REVISED RESTRUCTURING PLAN

OpenAI announced this week that its nonprofit parent will retain control over the organization, reversing earlier plans to transition into a fully for-profit company, as reported by Reuters and other sources.

The decision, driven by pressure from civic leaders, former employees, and co-founder Elon Musk, ensures the nonprofit board continues to oversee the ChatGPT maker's operations while restructuring its for-profit arm as a public benefit corporation (PBC).

Image: Nathan Laine

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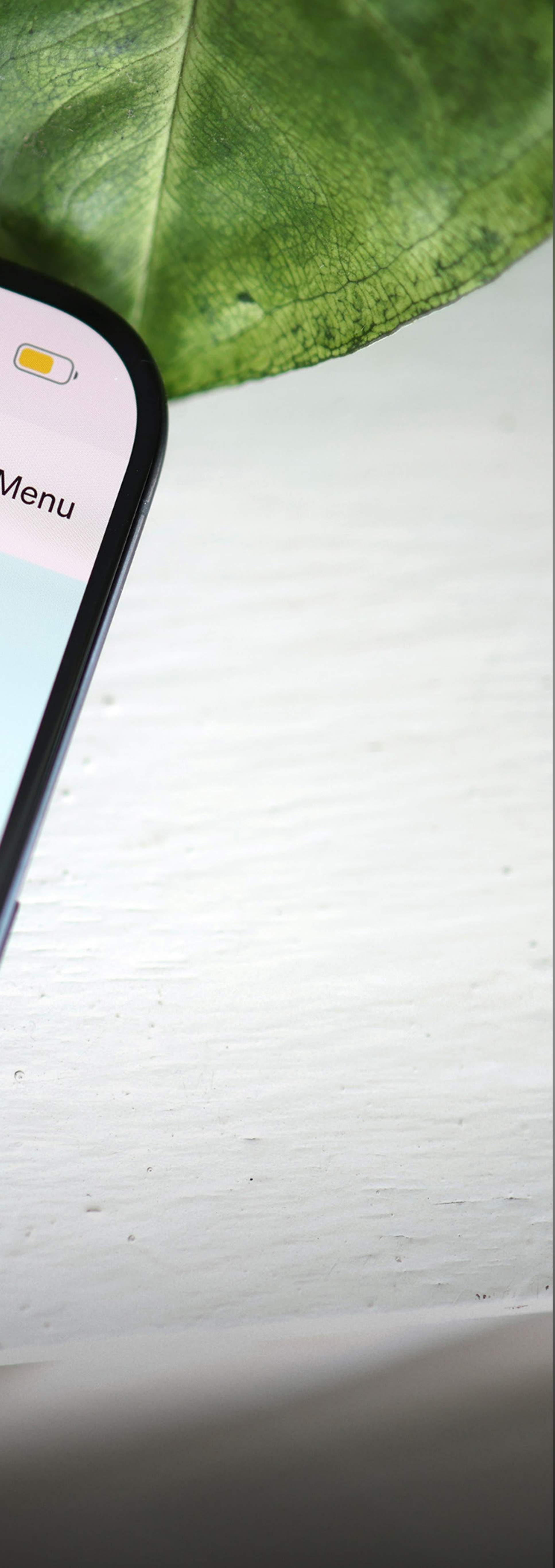
OpenAI
LTE

About

OpenAI is an AI research and deployment company. Our mission is to ensure that artificial general intelligence benefits all of humanity.

Image: Solen Feyissa



For AI developers, investors, and public interest advocates, the move addresses concerns about OpenAI's mission to prioritize societal benefits over profits in the rapidly evolving artificial intelligence sector.

The nonprofit will remain the sole governing body and a major shareholder in the PBC, securing significant resources to advance its charitable goals, according to board chair Bret Taylor.

The restructuring follows a tumultuous period, including a $40 billion funding round led by SoftBank, which was contingent on for-profit conversion, and a legal challenge from Musk, who argued the shift would abandon OpenAI's founding principles.

With 320 million monthly ChatGPT users, OpenAI's decision balances its need for capital with its commitment to responsible AI development, as confirmed in discussions with California and Delaware attorneys general.

NONPROFIT RETAINS OVERSIGHT

OpenAI's nonprofit board, established in 2015 to guide AI development for humanity's benefit, will continue to control the organization, as stated by Taylor in a blog post. The board will appoint directors to the new PBC, initially maintaining the same members for both entities, ensuring continuity in governance. This structure preserves the nonprofit's authority over OpenAI's operations, including its for-profit subsidiary, which was converted to a capped-profit model in 2019.

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The decision responds to concerns raised by civic leaders and AI researchers, who feared a for-profit shift would prioritize commercial interests, as noted in a company statement. The nonprofit's controlling stake aims to safeguard OpenAI's mission while allowing financial growth.

RESPONSE TO PUBLIC AND LEGAL PRESSURE

The reversal follows significant pushback, including a letter from over 30 signatories, including former OpenAI employees, Nobel laureates, and AI pioneer Geoffrey Hinton, urging California and Delaware attorneys general to block the for-profit plan, citing risks to AI safety and mission integrity. Elon Musk, who co-founded OpenAI and filed a lawsuit to halt the restructuring, argued it would breach the company's humanitarian goals, a claim supported by 12 ex-employees in a legal brief.

OpenAI's board, after engaging with state officials, opted to retain nonprofit control, as Taylor confirmed in a press call.

The California Teamsters and other groups also petitioned Attorney General Rob Bonta, alleging the restructuring could undermine nonprofit integrity, prompting Bonta's office to investigate.

These pressures shaped OpenAI's decision to maintain its nonprofit framework.

PUBLIC BENEFIT CORPORATION STRUCTURE

OpenAI will transform its for-profit subsidiary into a PBC, a corporate model that balances profit with public good, while keeping the nonprofit as the controlling shareholder.

The PBC structure, announced in December 2024, was initially set to remove nonprofit oversight, but the revised plan ensures the nonprofit's dominance, with substantial equity in the PBC to fund initiatives in healthcare, education, and science, as outlined by CEO Sam Altman in a letter to employees.

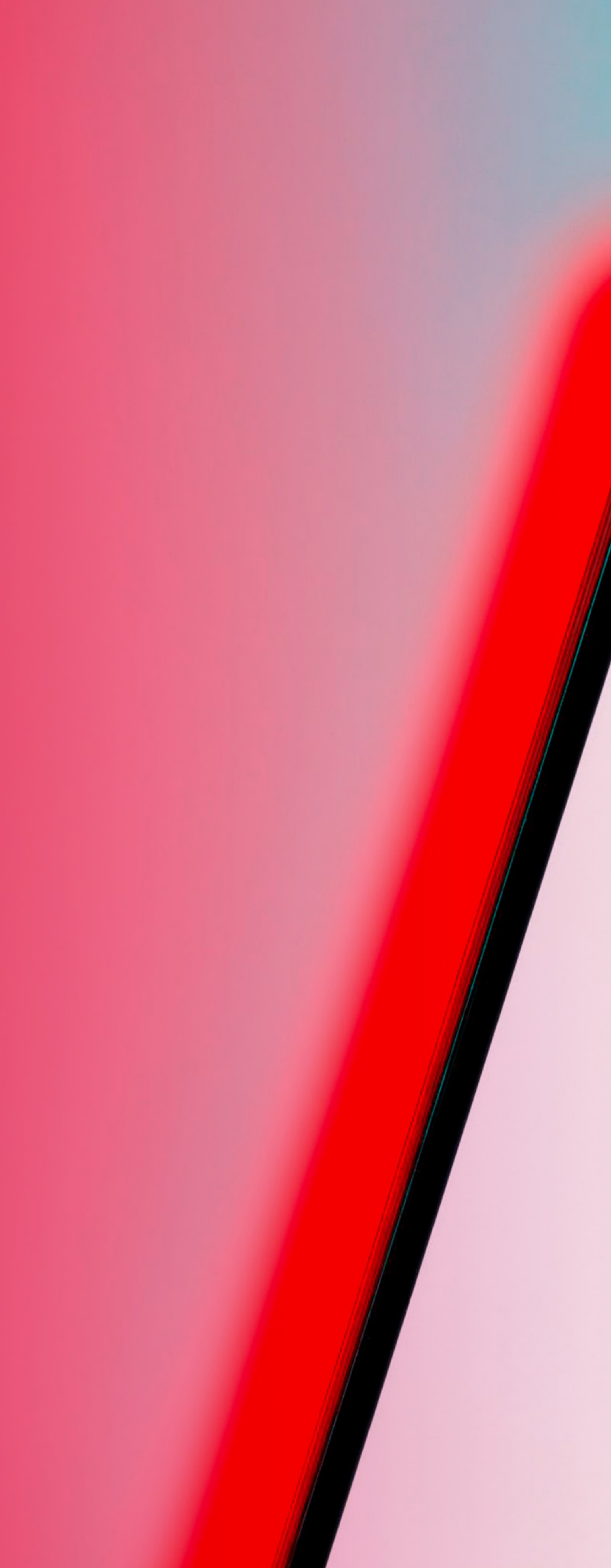
The change aims to unlock billions in funding, including a $40 billion round led by SoftBank, without sacrificing governance, addressing investor needs while aligning with OpenAI's mission, as reported by Bloomberg.

FUNDING AND VALUATION IMPLICATIONS

The $40 billion funding round, valuing OpenAI at $300 billion, was tied to the for-profit transition, with SoftBank potentially reducing its investment by $10 billion if restructuring faltered, per CNBC.

The nonprofit's retained control secures this capital, enabling OpenAI to compete with rivals like xAI while funding its 320 million-user ChatGPT platform, which struggles to profit at $200 monthly for Pro subscriptions, according to The Register.

The nonprofit's role as a major PBC shareholder will create one of the best-resourced nonprofits globally, supporting AI research without compromising oversight, as Taylor stated in a company blog post.



OpenAI

BACKGROUND OF RESTRUCTURING DEBATE

OpenAI’s nonprofit structure, designed to prioritize public benefit over profit, faced scrutiny after CEO Sam Altman’s brief ouster in November 2023, which exposed tensions between mission and commercialization.

The 2019 shift to a capped-profit model allowed limited investor returns, but the 2024 plan to fully separate the for-profit arm drew criticism from Musk and others, who filed lawsuits claiming it violated OpenAI’s founding charter.

The revised structure, retaining nonprofit control, responds to these concerns, as confirmed in OpenAI’s discussions with Delaware and California regulators.

The debate, fueled by former employees and academics, centered on ensuring AI safety and public accountability, with the nonprofit’s $21.1 million in net assets as of December 2023 underscoring its limited resources compared to OpenAI’s valuation, per its federal tax filing.

nAI

ELON MUSK PURSUES LAWSUIT AGAINST OPENAI DESPITE NONPROFIT CONTROL DECISION

Elon Musk will proceed with his lawsuit against OpenAI and its CEO, Sam Altman, despite the company's decision to maintain nonprofit control over its operations, according to a statement from Musk's lawyer, Marc Toberoff, reported this week.

The legal action, filed in 2024, accuses OpenAI of breaching its founding mission to develop artificial intelligence for humanity's benefit by pursuing a for-profit model.

For OpenAI's users, investors, and the AI industry, the ongoing dispute highlights tensions between the company's nonprofit roots and

its commercial ambitions, with Musk alleging OpenAI prioritizes profits for Altman, investors, and Microsoft.

OpenAI, which operates ChatGPT with 320 million monthly users, announced it would retain nonprofit governance, reversing a plan to become a fully for-profit entity, following pressure from Musk, former employees, and civic leaders.

The nonprofit will oversee a restructured public benefit corporation (PBC), holding a significant equity stake to fund its mission. Toberoff criticized the arrangement, claiming it obscures details and fails to address OpenAI's shift toward closed-source AI development.

The lawsuit, set for a jury trial in March 2026, reflects broader debates about AI governance as OpenAI navigates a $40 billion funding round and regulatory scrutiny.

MUSK'S LEGAL CLAIMS AND MOTIVATIONS

Musk, a co-founder of OpenAI in 2015, alleges the company violated its nonprofit charter by prioritizing commercial interests over public benefit, particularly through its partnership with Microsoft and restricted access to advanced AI models. The lawsuit, filed in a California federal court, claims breach of contract and fraud, arguing that OpenAI's initial promise of open-source, altruistic AI development misled early investors like Musk, who provided significant funding. Toberoff emphasized that the nonprofit's retained control does not resolve concerns about closed-source AI benefiting a select few, as stated in a press release.

OpenAI

The legal action intensified after OpenAI's 2024 plan to transition to a for-profit structure, prompting Musk to seek an injunction, which was denied in March 2025 by Judge Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers, though the case was allowed to proceed to trial. Musk's suit contends that OpenAI's commercial focus undermines its mission to advance AI for humanity's collective good.

OPENAI'S NONPROFIT RETENTION DECISION

OpenAI reversed its plan to become a fully for-profit company, announcing that its nonprofit parent, established in 2015, will maintain control and serve as a major shareholder in a new PBC. Board chair Bret Taylor stated the nonprofit would appoint directors to the PBC, initially mirroring the current board, to ensure mission-driven governance. The decision followed discussions with California and Delaware attorneys general, prompted by concerns from civic leaders and AI experts about prioritizing profits over safety.

The nonprofit, with $21.1 million in net assets as of December 2023, will gain resources from its PBC stake to fund initiatives in healthcare and education, as outlined by CEO Sam Altman in a letter to employees.

The move aims to balance OpenAI's need for capital with its commitment to public benefit, addressing criticisms that sparked the restructuring debate.

penA

PRESSURE FROM CRITICS AND FORMER EMPLOYEES

The decision to retain nonprofit control stemmed from intense backlash, including a letter from over 30 prominent figures, such as Nobel laureate Geoffrey Hinton and former OpenAI researchers, urging regulators to block a for-profit shift.

Twelve ex-employees filed a legal brief in April 2025, supporting Musk's lawsuit and arguing that removing nonprofit oversight would violate OpenAI's mission, as documented in court filings. The California Teamsters and other groups also petitioned Attorney General Rob Bonta, alleging risks to AI safety and nonprofit integrity.

These criticisms, amplified by Musk's legal challenge, led OpenAI to engage with state officials, resulting in the revised governance structure, as confirmed by Taylor in a company statement. The pressure underscored public and expert concerns about AI development prioritizing commercial gain over societal good.

FUNDING AND PBC RESTRUCTURING DETAILS

OpenAI's restructuring involves converting its for-profit subsidiary, created in 2019 as a capped-profit entity, into a PBC to attract investment while maintaining nonprofit oversight.

A $40 billion funding round, led by SoftBank and valuing OpenAI at $300 billion, was contingent on the for-profit transition, but the nonprofit's retained control secures this capital, as noted by Altman in a press call. The

PBC structure, similar to that of competitors like Anthropic, allows profit generation alongside mission-driven goals.

The nonprofit's significant equity in the PBC will fund research, with potential to make it one of the most resource-rich nonprofits globally, according to OpenAI's blog post.

The funding supports ChatGPT's 320 million monthly users and future AI projects, despite high operational costs.

LEGAL AND COMPETITIVE CONTEXT

The lawsuit, scheduled for a March 2026 trial, follows a contentious history, including OpenAI's countersuit in April 2025 accusing Musk of harassment and bad-faith efforts to undermine the company.

OpenAI rejected Musk's $97.4 billion bid to buy the firm in February 2025, calling it a "sham" aimed at disrupting its business, as stated in court documents. Musk's lawyer countered that the bid was serious, reflecting his commitment to OpenAI's original mission.

Musk, who left OpenAI in 2018 and founded xAI, competes with OpenAI through its Grok chatbot, intensifying the legal and competitive stakes.

The dispute, involving Microsoft as a key investor, reflects broader tensions in AI governance, as regulatory scrutiny grows in California and Delaware, where OpenAI is headquartered and incorporated.

GOOGLE'S AD NETWORK RULED AN ILLEGAL MONOPOLY, FACES PENALTY PHASE

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A federal judge has declared Google's digital advertising network an illegal monopoly, marking the second such ruling against the tech giant in less than a year, as reported this week.

U.S. District Judge Leonie Brinkema in Virginia found that Google unlawfully maintained dominance in publisher ad servers and ad exchanges, exploiting its $1.8 trillion market position to suppress competition.

For advertisers, publishers, and tech industry observers, the decision signals potential upheaval in Google's ad tech business, which generates tens of billions annually, as the case moves to a penalty phase later this year or early next.

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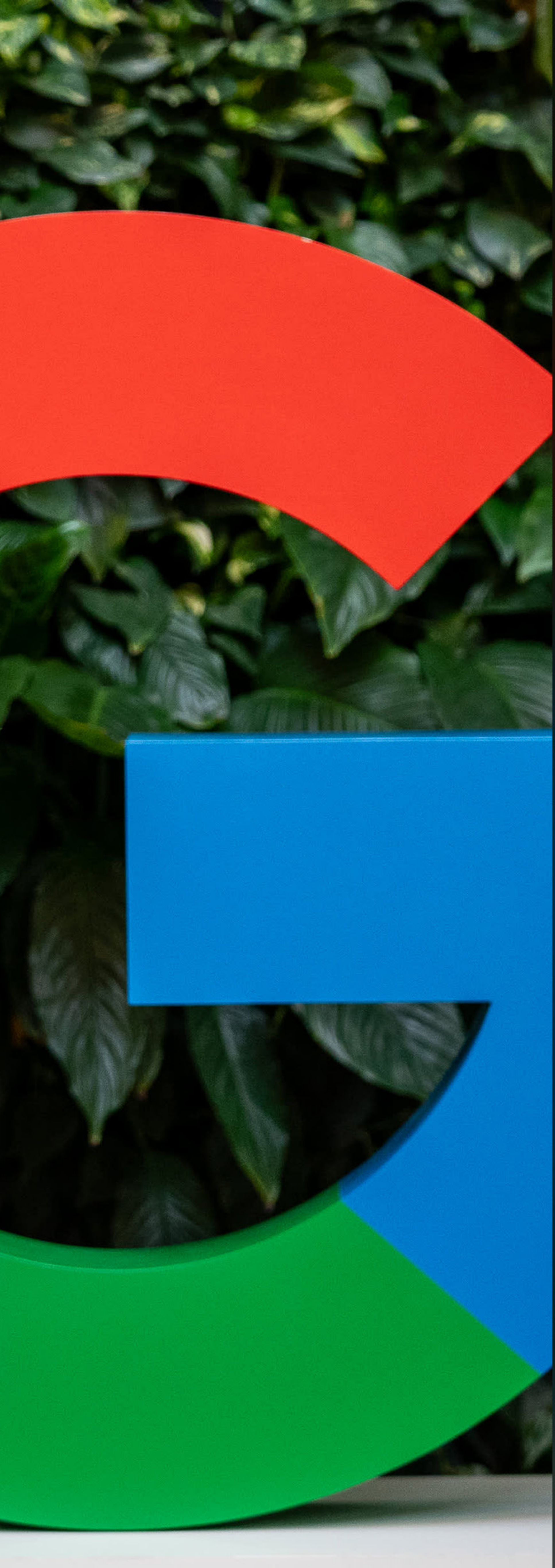

The ruling follows a 2023 Justice Department lawsuit accusing Google of anticompetitive practices, such as tying its ad server and exchange products to exclude rivals, harming publishers by reducing their revenue.

Google, planning to appeal, argues its tools are chosen for simplicity and affordability, with Vice President of Regulatory Affairs Lee-Anne Mulholland stating the company won half the case, as the court rejected claims of monopoly in advertiser ad networks.

The verdict, coupled with a prior August 2024 ruling against Google's search engine monopoly, intensifies scrutiny of its practices, with the Justice Department seeking measures like divestitures to restore competition.

BRINKEMA'S RULING ON AD TECH MONOPOLY

Judge Brinkema's 115-page decision determined Google illegally dominated publisher ad servers, used by websites to manage ad inventory, and ad exchanges, which facilitate real-time ad auctions.

The ruling found Google's contractual policies and technological integration, in place for over a decade, entrenched its monopoly power, harming publishers by limiting their revenue, as stated in the court's findings.

The Justice Department's case, filed in 2023, highlighted Google's ability to keep up to 36 cents per dollar on ad transactions when using its full ad tech stack.

Google did not violate antitrust laws in acquiring DoubleClick in 2008 or Admeld in 2011, as these deals alone did not prove exclusionary conduct, per Brinkema's ruling.

The company plans to appeal, emphasizing that publishers choose its tools for effectiveness, as Mulholland noted in a statement.

JUSTICE DEPARTMENT'S ANTITRUST CASE

The Justice Department, joined by a coalition of states, argued Google employed tactics like acquisitions and restrictive policies to eliminate competitors in the ad tech market.

The 2023 lawsuit claimed Google's dominance in publisher ad servers and ad exchanges allowed it to charge excessive fees, reducing funds for content providers.

Prosecutors cited a 2009 email from Google executive David Rosenblatt, stating the company aimed to replicate its search dominance in display ads, as evidence of intent, per court arguments.

The case focused on open-web display ads, such as banner ads on websites, but Google contended the government's market definition ignored competition from mobile apps and streaming platforms like Meta and Amazon, as argued by lawyer Karen Dunn during the September 2024 trial.

The Justice Department's victory sets the stage for remedy hearings to address Google's practices.

AB CONCE

PENALTY PHASE AND POTENTIAL REMEDIES

The ruling initiates a penalty phase, expected to begin late 2025 or early 2026, to determine measures to restore competition, potentially including divestitures of Google's ad tech products like AdX and DFP, as proposed by the Justice Department.

A similar remedy phase for Google's search monopoly case, ruled illegal in August 2024, is underway, with prosecutors seeking to force the sale of the Chrome browser, per court filings. U.S. Attorney General Pamela Bondi called the ad tech ruling a "landmark victory" to curb Google's control over digital markets, as stated in a Justice Department release.

Google's appeal, likely to extend over years, will delay immediate impacts, as analysts like Brian Pitz of BMO Markets noted, with Alphabet's shares dropping 1% to $151.22 after the ruling. The Justice Department's push for a 10-year ban on Google operating an ad exchange underscores the severity of proposed penalties, per Reuters.

GOOGLE'S AD TECH MARKET DOMINANCE

Google's ad tech stack, including DoubleClick for publishers, Google Ads for advertisers, and AdExchange for auctions, processes billions of daily ad transactions, generating an estimated $31 billion annually, per CNN Business.

The Justice Department argued Google's integration of these tools created a monopoly, allowing it to retain up to 36% of each ad dollar, as presented during the three-week trial in 2024.

Google

Publishers, reliant on Google's ad server, faced reduced revenue due to anticompetitive policies, such as limiting desirable features, according to Brinkema's findings.

Google countered that its tools are interoperable with competitors and that the ad market includes rivals like Meta, Amazon, and Comcast, as Mulholland stated in a company response.

The court rejected claims that Google held a monopoly in advertiser ad networks, a partial win for the company.

BROADER ANTITRUST CHALLENGES

The ad tech ruling follows an August 2024 decision by U.S. District Judge Amit Mehta, declaring Google's search engine an illegal monopoly for its default agreements with companies like Apple, costing $26 billion in 2021, per court documents.

A 2023 federal jury verdict also found Google's Play Store for Android apps to be an illegal monopoly, with ongoing litigation over remedies. These cases, spanning search, ads, and apps, reflect bipartisan scrutiny, initiated under the Trump administration and continued under Biden, as noted by Justice Department lawyer Aaron Teitelbaum.

Google's appeal of the ad tech ruling, combined with its challenges to the search and Play Store verdicts, will prolong legal battles, potentially delaying penalties for years, as reported by PBS News. The company's $1.8 trillion valuation underscores the stakes, with investors braced for setbacks, per BMO Markets analysis.

MICROSOFT ENDS SKYPE AFTER 22 YEARS, MOVES USERS TO TEAMS

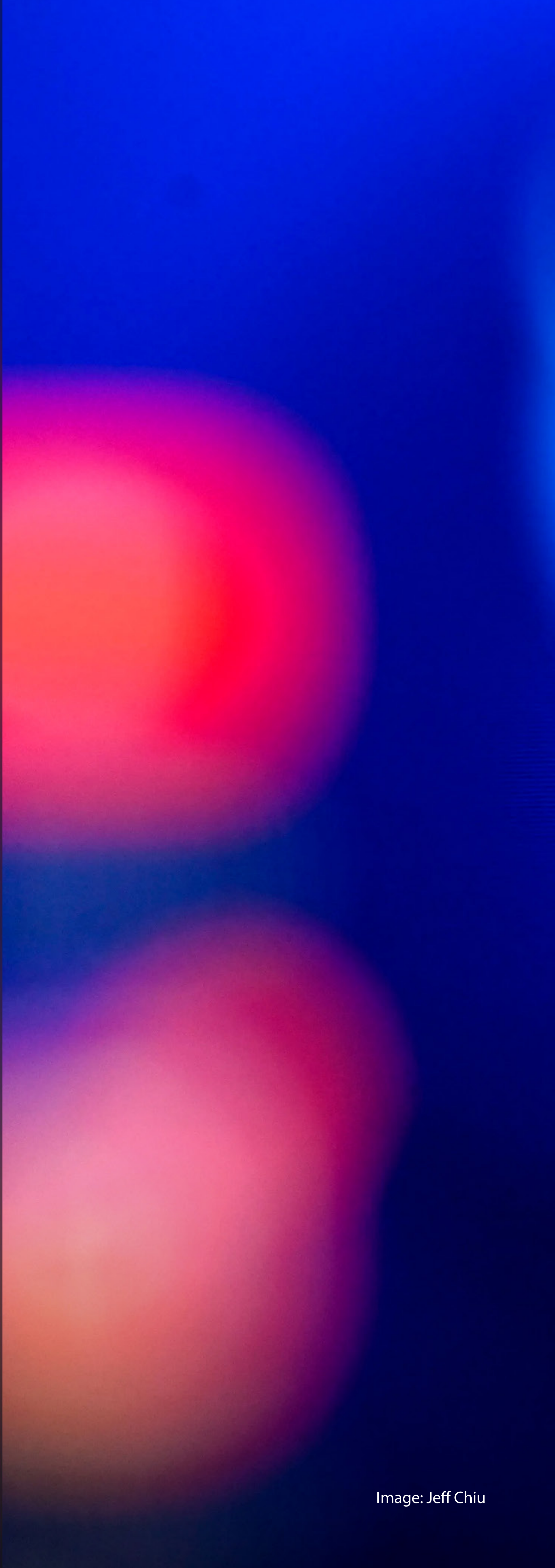

Image: Jeff Chiu

Microsoft will terminate Skype, its internet-based calling and messaging service, effective May 5, 2025, concluding 22 years of operation since its launch in 2003, as announced this week. The company is shifting focus to Microsoft Teams Free, urging Skype users to transfer their accounts, chats, and contacts to the new platform. For long-time users, businesses, and technology observers, the closure marks the end of a service that reshaped online communication, with Microsoft highlighting Teams' advanced features as its future consumer offering.

Skype

Acquired by Microsoft for $8.5 billion in 2011, Skype pioneered free voice and video calls, peaking at over 300 million monthly users in the mid-2010s. Competition from Zoom, WhatsApp, and Apple's FaceTime, alongside Microsoft's emphasis on Teams, reduced Skype's daily users to 36 million by 2023. Users can migrate to Teams or export data until January 2026, with Skype credits and subscriptions valid until April 3, 2025. The decision has drawn mixed responses, with nostalgia for Skype's legacy tempered by criticism over Microsoft's handling of account balances.

SKYPE'S LEGACY AND USER BASE DECLINE

Launched in 2003 by Estonian engineers Niklas Zennström and Janus Friis, Skype introduced Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) for free computer-to-computer calls and low-cost landline connections. eBay's $2.6 billion acquisition in 2005 added video calling, growing its user base to 54 million. Microsoft's 2011 purchase integrated Skype into Office and Xbox, but mobile-friendly rivals like WhatsApp and FaceTime eroded its market, with monthly users falling to 23 million by 2020, despite a pandemic-driven uptick.

The rise of Teams, with over 320 million users by 2024, and competitors like Zoom, which surged during remote work, diminished Skype's role. Microsoft's shift to prioritize Teams' Office integration further marginalized Skype, as noted by Jeff Teper, president of Microsoft 365 collaborative apps.

Image: Christin Hume

MIGRATION TO TEAMS FREE

Microsoft is directing Skype users to Teams Free, where existing credentials will automatically transfer chats and contacts. Users can download Teams from the company's website and log in to continue communications, with a guide outlining the process. Teams supports one-on-one and group calls, messaging, file sharing, and features like meeting hosting, with consumer calling minutes increasing fourfold over the past two years, per Teper.

Skype remains functional until May 5, 2025, allowing data migration or export of chats, contacts, and call history via the Skype web portal's tool until January 2026. Microsoft plans no job cuts, reallocating resources to Teams development.

HANDLING OF SKYPE CREDITS AND SUBSCRIPTIONS

Skype credits and subscriptions, including calling plans and Skype Numbers, will remain active until April 3, 2025, with renewals continuing until then. After May 5, paid users can access the Skype Dial Pad through the Skype web portal or Teams Free, using credits or Microsoft 365 Personal and Family subscriptions for calls. Microsoft will not refund unused credits, drawing criticism from users like Stacey Griffin, with $24.74 in her account, as reported by The Washington Post.

Consumer Reports' Stacey Higginbotham recommended refunding credits or offering service credits, citing Amazon's 2023 Halo refund policy, highlighting concerns about fairness for users with prepaid balances.

USER SENTIMENT AND CRITICISMS

The closure has evoked nostalgia, with users recalling Skype's role in connecting families and enabling long-distance relationships through its early VoIP innovations. Technology journalist Will Guyatt noted its revolutionary impact but criticized Microsoft for minimal updates, leaving Skype less competitive against Zoom during the pandemic. Users like Anna Simpson of Cedarwood Digital expressed regret over losing Skype's intuitive interface, which facilitated global communication.

Criticism centers on Microsoft's refusal to refund credits, with some users comparing the move to corporate overreach. The decision to prioritize Teams, seen as less user-friendly for personal use, has fueled debate about Microsoft's handling of Skype's legacy.

COMPETITION AND TEAMS' POSITION

Skype faced competition from Zoom, Google Meet, Meta's WhatsApp, and Apple's FaceTime, which offered mobile accessibility and simpler interfaces. Teams, with 320 million users, emerged as Microsoft's primary platform, integrated into Windows 11 in 2021 while Skype was sidelined. Cisco's Webex and other tools further eroded Skype's market, as businesses adopted enterprise-focused solutions.

Microsoft's emphasis on Teams, supporting features like calendar management, positions it as a versatile replacement, though its corporate focus contrasts with Skype's consumer-friendly roots, shaping the transition's reception.

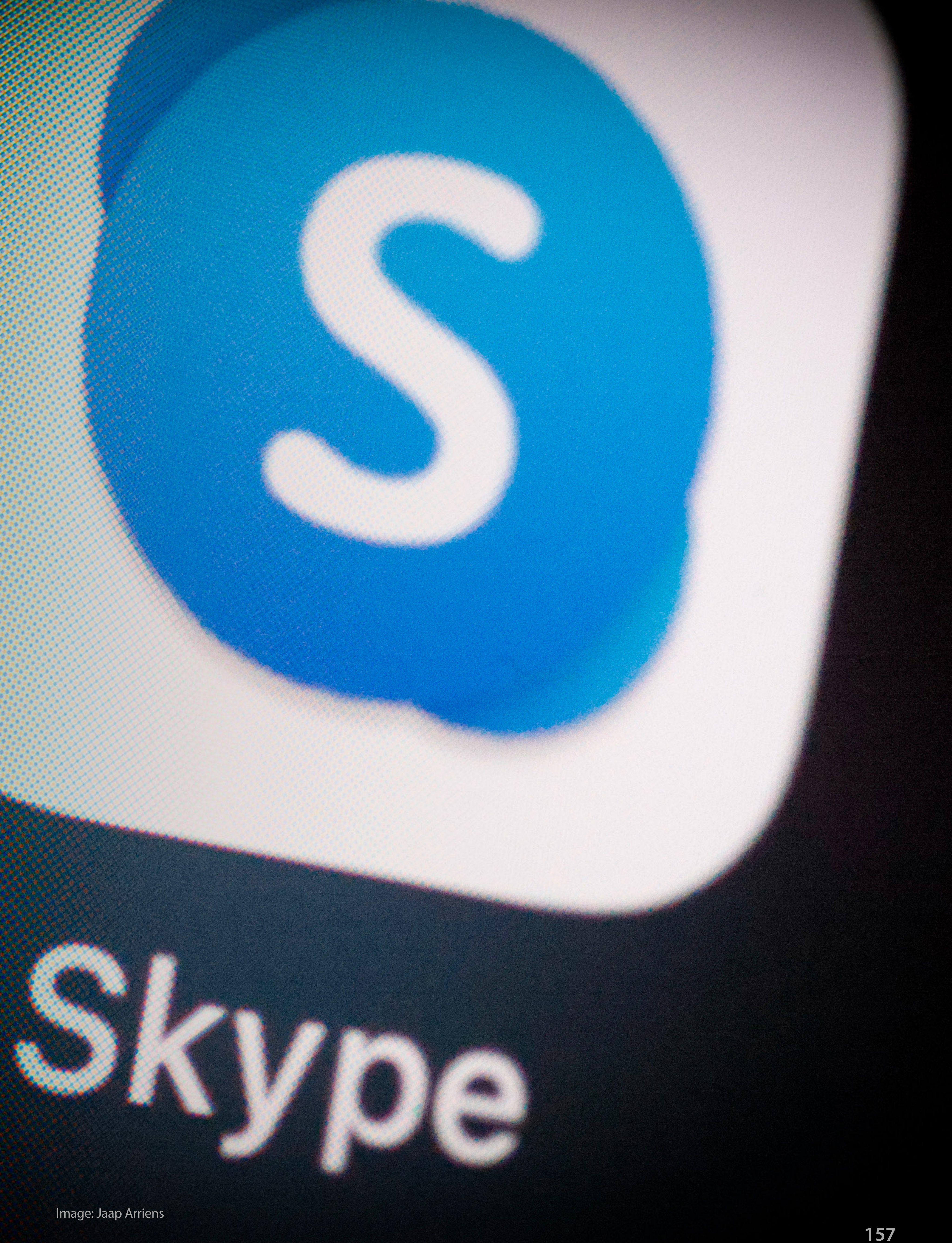

Image: Jaap Arriens

MICHIGAN HOUSE PUSHES TIKTOK BAN ON STATE DEVICES TO CURB FOREIGN INFLUENCE

TikTok
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The Michigan House of Representatives has introduced legislation to ban TikTok on state-owned devices, citing concerns over foreign influence and data security risks posed by the Chinese-owned app.

The bill, spearheaded by Rep. Andrew Beeler, R-Port Huron, targets apps controlled by foreign adversaries, specifically naming TikTok and its parent company, ByteDance, due to fears that user data could be accessed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

For Michigan's public sector, taxpayers, and tech policy observers, the move reflects growing national security anxieties about TikTok's operations, building on a 2023 state policy that restricted the app on government devices, except for Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's promotional account.

The legislation aligns with a broader U.S. push to limit TikTok, which has over 170 million American users, amid debates over privacy, free speech, and national security. Background concerns about TikTok stem from its 2017 acquisition by ByteDance, a Beijing-based firm subject to China's National Intelligence Law, which mandates data sharing with the government.

Since 2020, U.S. officials, including the FBI, have flagged TikTok as a potential tool for espionage and propaganda, citing incidents like ByteDance employees tracking journalists' locations in 2022.

Michigan's bill, awaiting a Senate vote, could set a precedent for stricter state-level restrictions, though it faces challenges from Whitmer's use of the app and public support for its 195,000-follower gubernatorial account.

MICHIGAN'S PROPOSED TIKTOK BAN

House Bill 4568 seeks to prohibit TikTok and other foreign adversary-controlled apps on state-issued devices, expanding a 2023 administrative ban implemented by Michigan's Department of Technology, Management and Budget.

The bill, passed by the House with bipartisan support, targets ByteDance due to its potential to share user data with the CCP, as stated by Rep. Beeler in a floor speech.

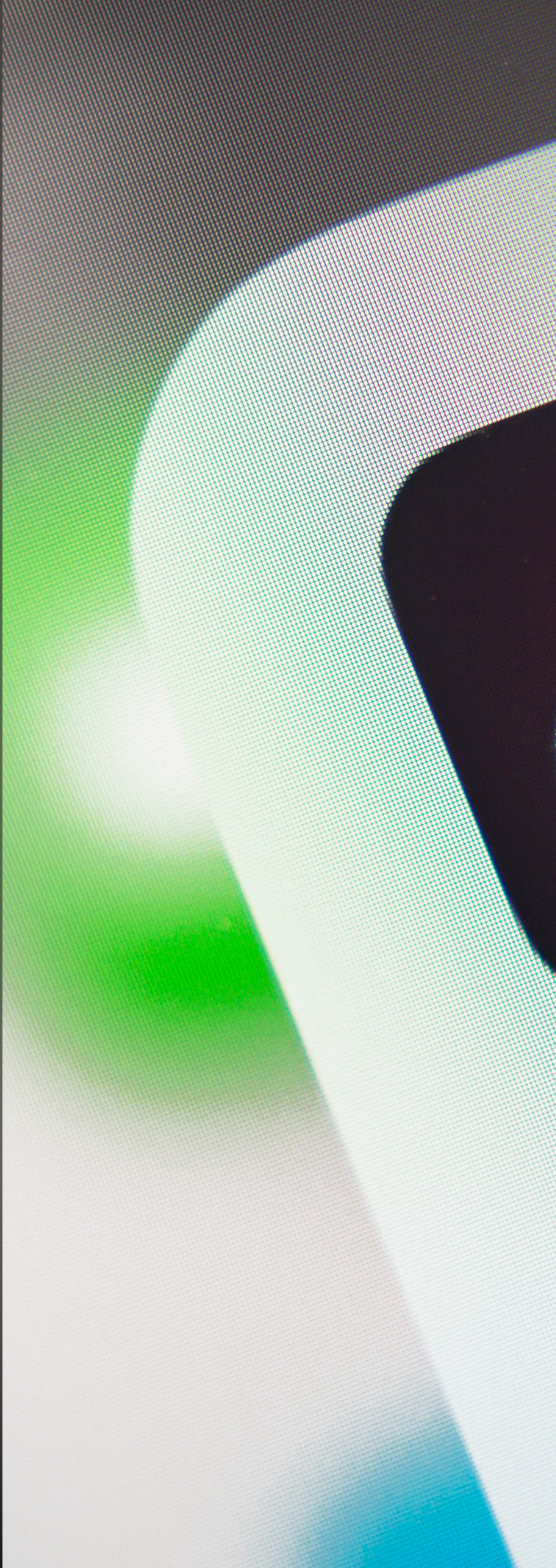
The legislation allows exceptions for law enforcement and cybersecurity purposes but excludes promotional uses, potentially affecting Whitmer's BigGretchWhitmer account, which has nearly 200,000 followers.

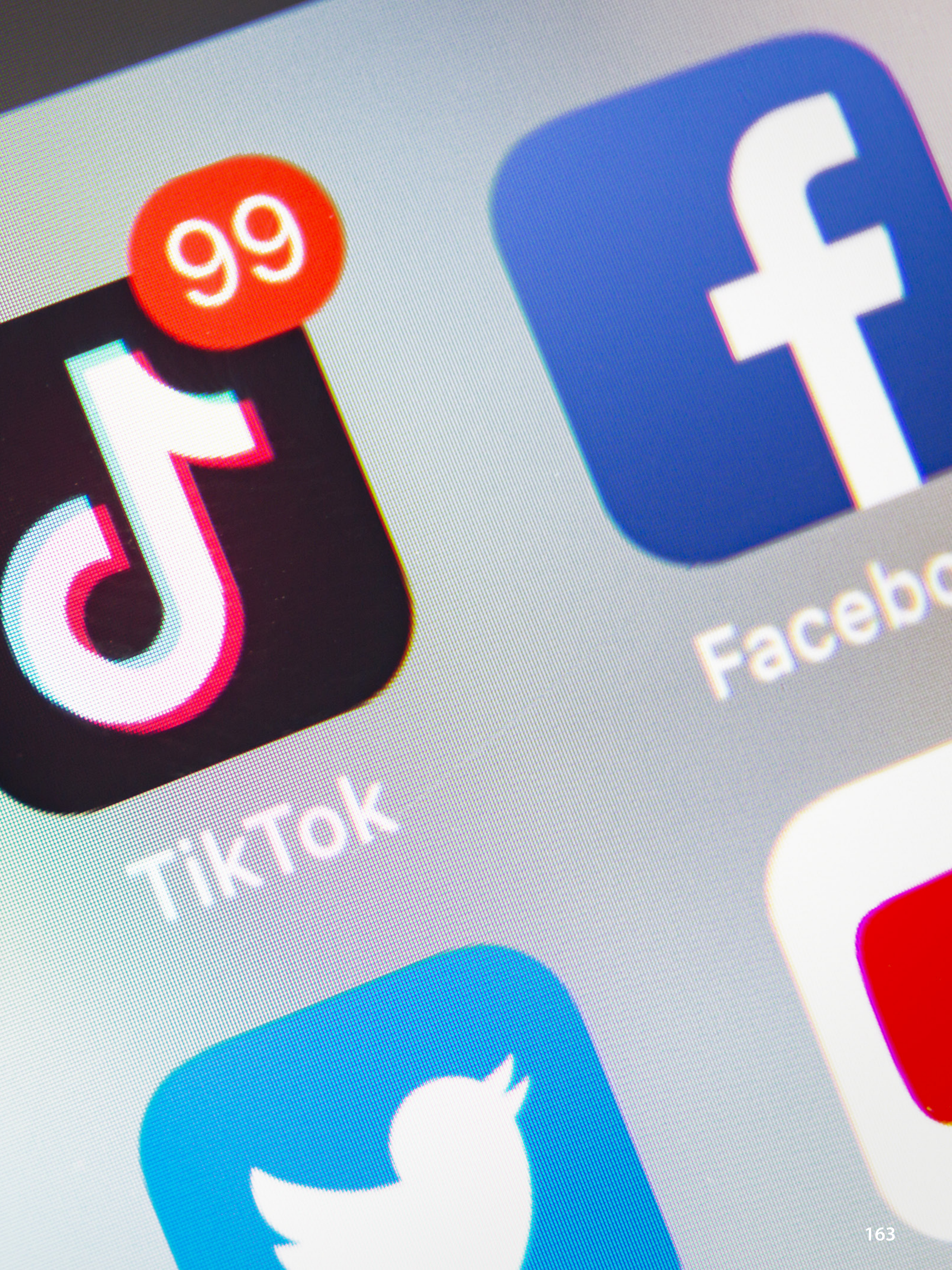
The bill requires the state to block TikTok's website and app functionality on government devices, building on a policy effective March 1, 2023, that restricted access but permitted Whitmer's "air-gapped" device for public communication, as confirmed by acting chief security officer Jayson Cavendish.

It now awaits Senate consideration in the Labor Committee, where Sen. Lana Theis, R-Brighton, who introduced a similar bill in 2023, supports its passage.

BACKGROUND OF TIKTOK CONCERNS

TikTok's "problem" in the U.S. emerged after ByteDance acquired Musical.ly in 2017, rebranding it as TikTok and growing its user base to over 1 billion globally by 2021. U.S. officials raised alarms in 2019 when the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS) began reviewing ByteDance's ownership, citing China's

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2017 National Intelligence Law, which compels companies to share data with the government.

FBI Director Christopher Wray warned in 2022 that TikTok could be used for espionage or influence operations, a concern amplified by ByteDance's 2022 admission that employees accessed U.S. journalists' location data to track leaks, leading to four firings.

Federal and state actions followed, with President Joe Biden signing a 2022 law banning TikTok on federal devices, joined by over 30 states, including Michigan, by 2023.

A 2024 federal law, the Protecting Americans from Foreign Adversary Controlled Applications Act (PAFACA), mandated ByteDance to divest TikTok by January 19, 2025, or face a U.S. ban, upheld by the Supreme Court despite a challenge from TikTok's 170 million U.S. users.

President-elect Donald Trump issued an executive order on January 20, 2025, delaying enforcement for 75 days to negotiate a resolution, as reported by The White House. These events frame Michigan's legislative push as part of a national effort to address TikTok's perceived risks.

WHITMER'S TIKTOK EXEMPTION AND PUBLIC DEBATE

Gov. Whitmer's TikTok account, BigGretchWhitmer, with 195,000 followers and millions of views, has been a point of contention since Michigan's 2023 ban allowed her an exemption for promotional purposes, as noted by spokesperson Bobby Leddy.

The device, described as "air-gapped" to avoid state server connections, complies with security guidelines, but critics, including seven Michigan congressional Republicans in a 2022 letter, urged Whitmer to delete the account and ban TikTok on all state devices, calling it a national security risk. Rep. Beeler's bill eliminates such exemptions, potentially forcing Whitmer to use a personal device.

Public sentiment, reflected in user comments on platforms, shows support for Whitmer's use of TikTok to reach younger audiences, with some arguing it's a vital communication tool, while others back the ban, citing data privacy fears.

The debate mirrors national tensions, with TikTok's 58% daily teen usage per Pew Research fueling arguments about its influence versus its utility.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY IN MICHIGAN

Michigan's TikTok restrictions began in March 2020 with a "monitored mode" requiring security warnings for state device access, evolving into a full ban on March 1, 2023, except for Whitmer's account and law enforcement uses, as confirmed by Cavendish.

Senate Bill 15, introduced by Theis in January 2023, sought to codify this ban but stalled in the Senate Labor Committee, despite bipartisan concerns raised by FBI warnings and 19 other states' bans.

The current House bill, introduced in 2025, builds on these efforts, gaining traction after a 2024 House vote to advance similar restrictions, as noted in Michigan Advance.

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The bill's focus on foreign influence aligns with federal actions, such as the 2022 No TikTok on Government Devices Act, and reflects Michigan's response to growing evidence of ByteDance's data practices, including a 2023 incident where employees accessed U.S. user data from China, as reported by Reuters.

BROADER IMPLICATIONS AND REGULATORY CONTEXT

The Michigan legislation coincides with national and global scrutiny of TikTok, exemplified by Canada's 2024 order to dissolve TikTok's local business and Romania's cancellation of a presidential election over alleged TikTok interference, per Britannica.

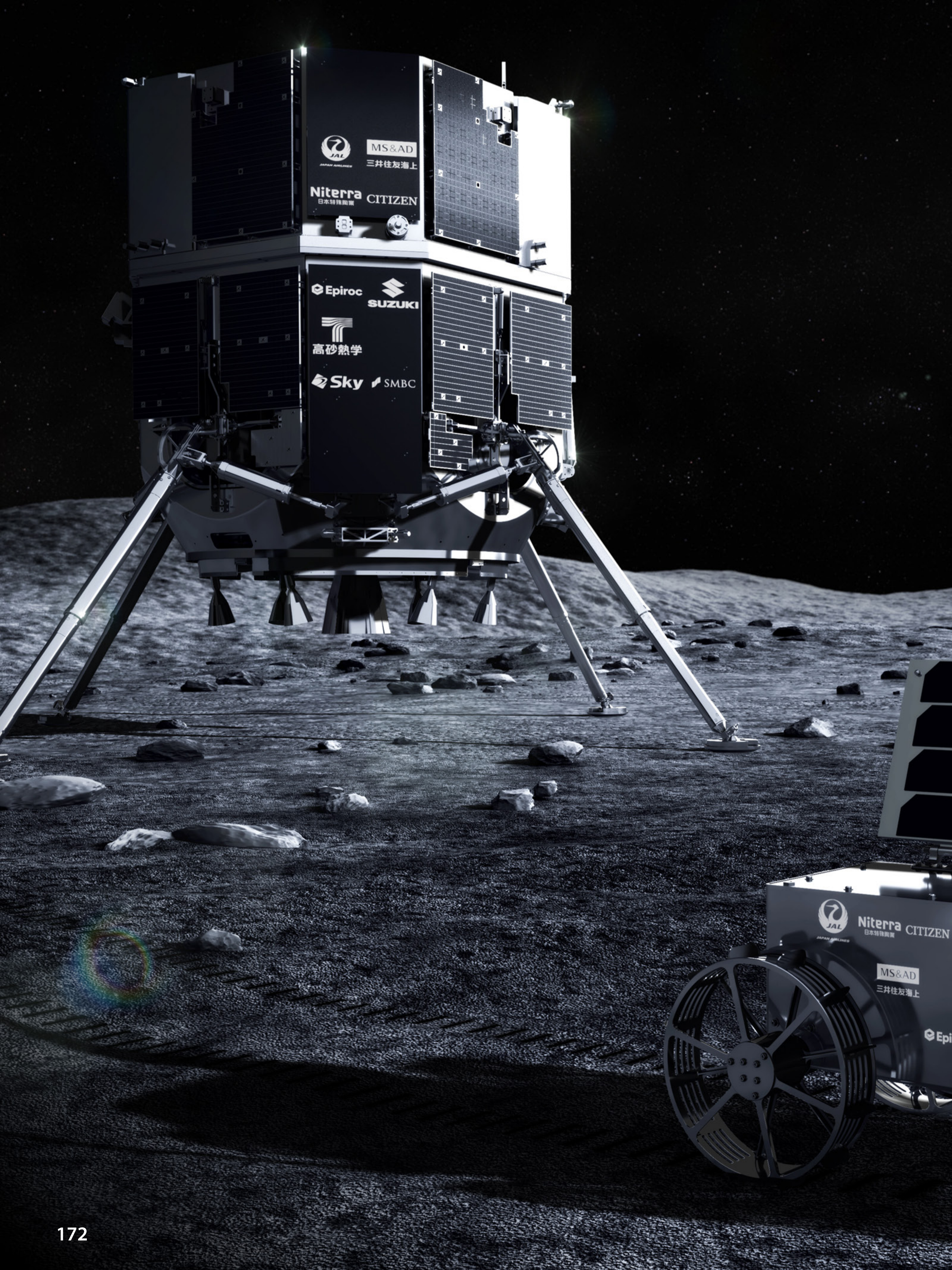
The U.S. Supreme Court's January 2025 ruling upheld PAFACA, rejecting TikTok's First Amendment claims, with Speaker Mike Johnson advocating for ByteDance's divestiture to a U.S. company, as stated on January 19, 2025.

Trump's executive order, delaying enforcement, suggests a potential compromise, but the law's bipartisan support indicates sustained pressure on TikTok, per PBS News.

Michigan's bill could influence other states, as seen in New Jersey and Wisconsin's 2023 bans, and may prompt broader data privacy discussions, though critics like the ACLU argue such measures risk overreach without comprehensive federal privacy laws, as noted by the Atlantic Council.

The outcome hinges on Senate approval and Whitmer's stance, given her exemption, shaping Michigan's role in the national TikTok debate.

JAPANESE PRIVATE LUNAR LANDER REACHES MOON ORBIT FOR JUNE LANDING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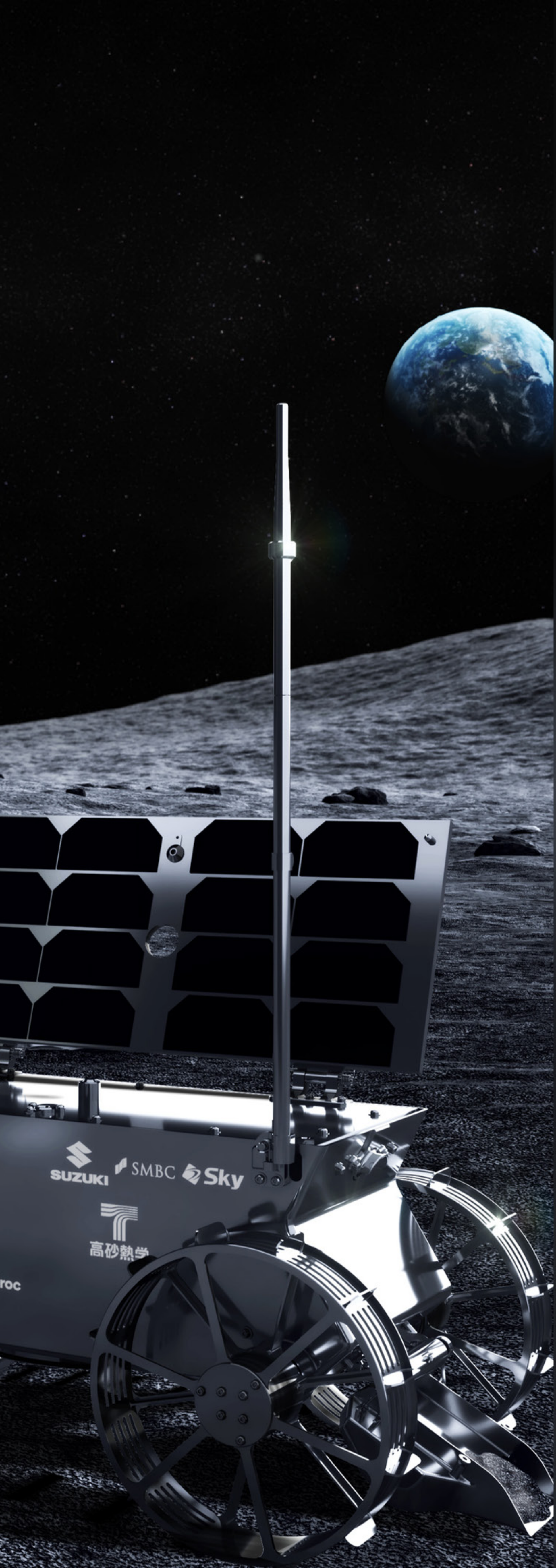


A private Japanese lunar lander, Resilience, developed by Tokyo-based ispace, has successfully entered lunar orbit, setting the stage for a historic touchdown attempt in early June 2025, as announced this week.

Launched by SpaceX in January 2025 alongside a U.S.-based Firefly Aerospace lander, Resilience is now circling the moon at an altitude of 280 miles, preparing to land in Mare Frigoris, a basaltic plain in the northern hemisphere.

For space exploration enthusiasts, scientists, and the global tech industry, this mission marks Japan's second bid for a private lunar landing, following ispace's 2023 attempt that ended in a crash.

The lander carries a micro rover equipped with a scoop to collect lunar soil for analysis, along with other scientific experiments, aiming to contribute to lunar resource exploration. ispace's CEO, Takeshi Hakamada, confirmed the orbit insertion, stating the company is meticulously preparing for the June 5 landing, as reported by Space.com.

The mission's success would make ispace the first private Asian company to achieve a soft lunar landing, building on recent U.S. private successes by Firefly Aerospace and Intuitive Machines in March 2025.

MISSION OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

Resilience, launched on a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket, entered lunar orbit after a low-energy, fuel-efficient trajectory that included a close flyby on February 14, 2025.

The lander's mission targets a soft landing in Mare Frigoris on June 5, 2025, carrying a mini rover and experiments to analyze lunar soil and surface conditions.

ispace aims to advance lunar exploration and resource utilization, supporting future commercial activities, as stated in a company release.

The mission follows ispace's first attempt in April 2023, which failed when its Hakuto-R lander crashed due to a navigation error.

ORBITAL PATH AND LANDING PLAN

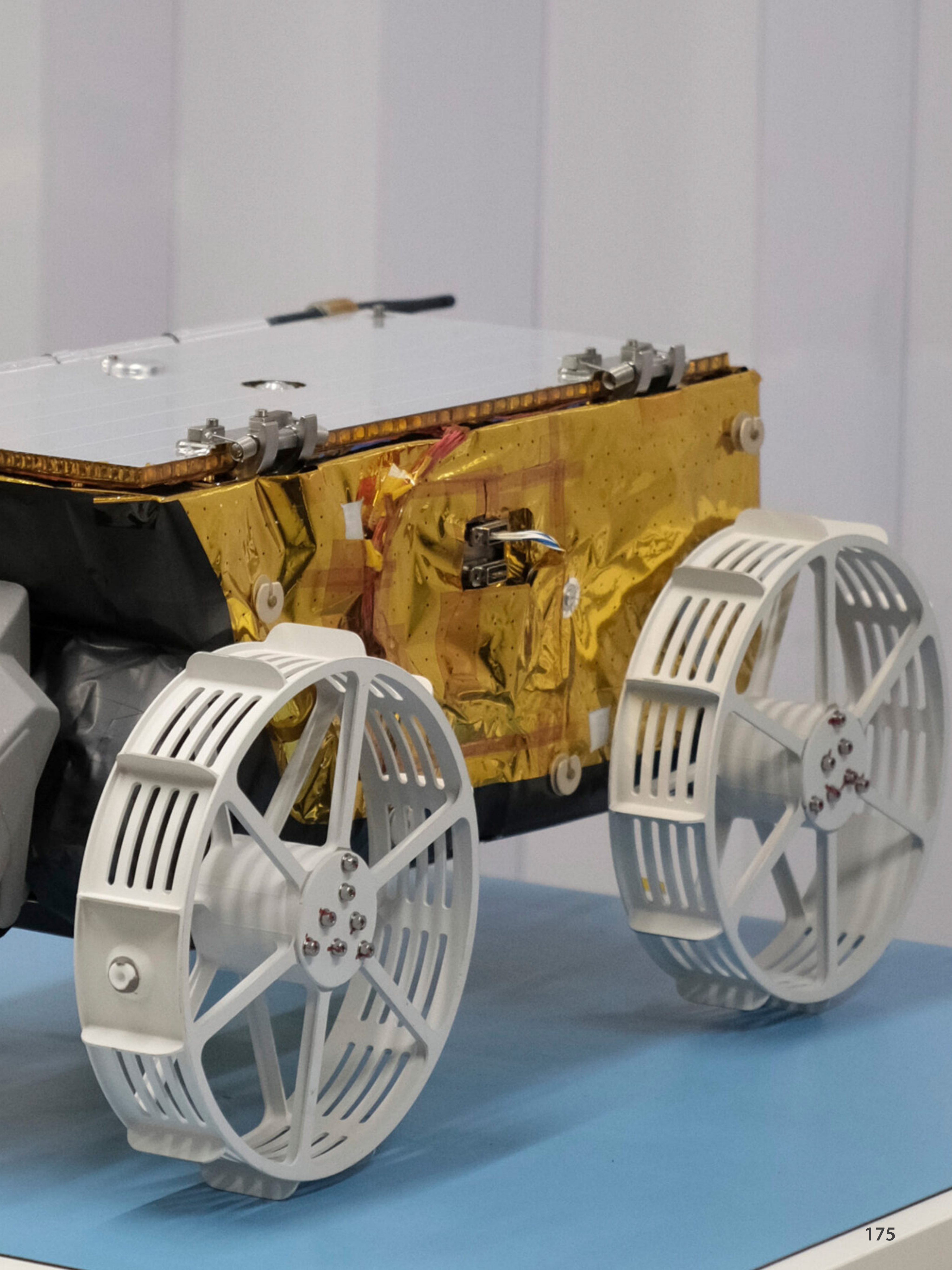
The lander is currently in an elliptical lunar orbit, ranging from 62 miles at its closest to 1,430 miles at its farthest.

On June 5, Resilience will perform a braking burn to decelerate from orbit, using pre-set commands to adjust its attitude and velocity for a one-hour descent to the lunar surface, targeting a precise landing in Mare Frigoris.

ispace plans to livestream the event from its Tokyo mission control, allowing real-time public tracking, as confirmed in a company statement.

MICRO ROVER AND SCIENTIFIC PAYLOAD

Resilience carries a micro rover equipped with a scoop to gather lunar soil for analysis, designed to study the moon's composition and potential resources. The rover, developed by ispace, includes a 360-degree imaging system from Canada's Canadensys Aerospace, which captured images during a February 2025 flyby, as shared in a company post. Additional experiments onboard aim to collect data on lunar geology and environmental conditions, supporting ispace's goal of enabling commercial lunar exploration.

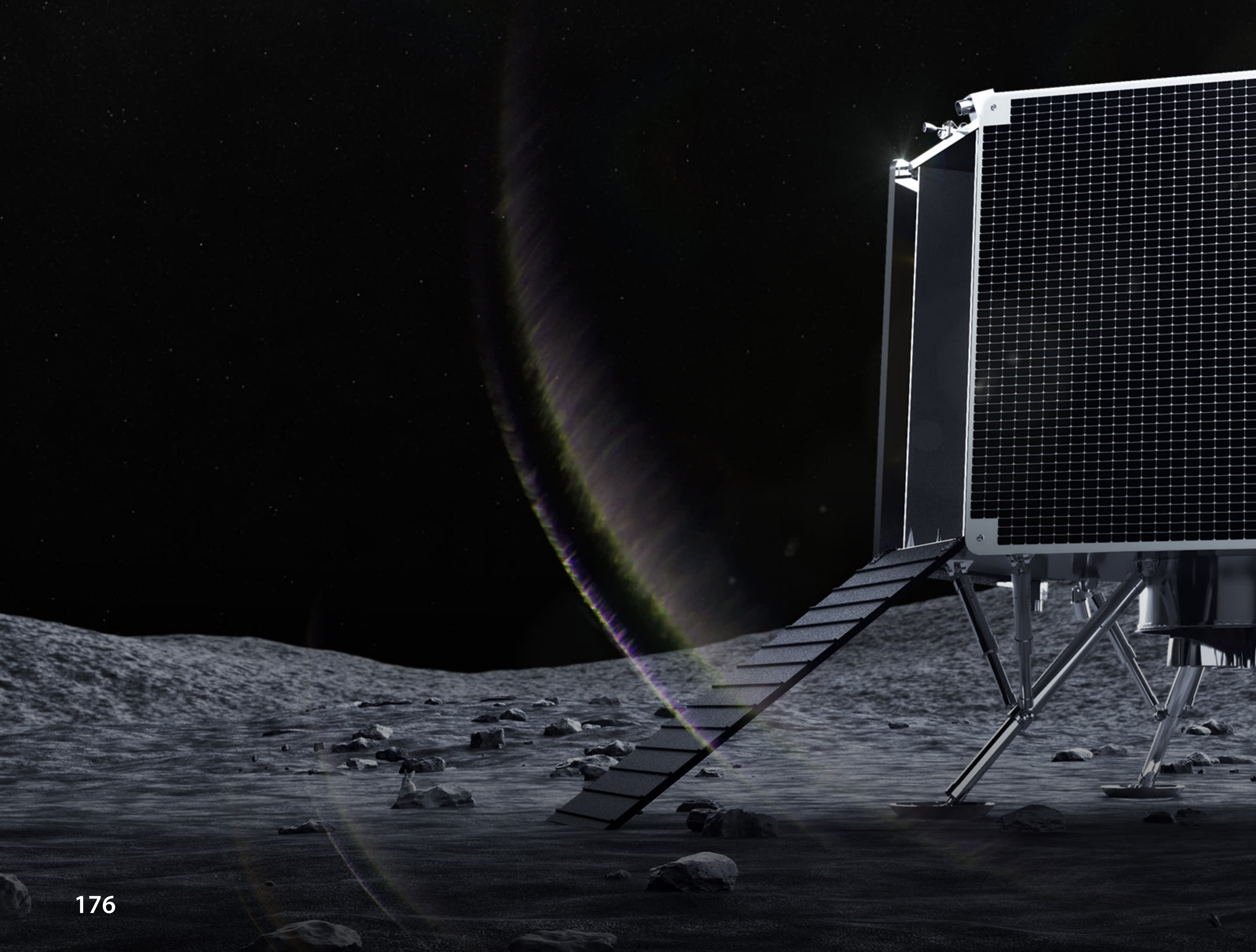


COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE AND RECENT LUNAR MISSIONS

The Resilience mission follows U.S. private lunar landings in March 2025, with Firefly Aerospace achieving the first successful private soft landing, followed by Intuitive Machines' Odysseus, which landed sideways in a crater.

Japan's national space agency, JAXA, accomplished a soft landing with its SLIM spacecraft in January 2024, making ispace's attempt a potential milestone for private Asian companies.

The mission's success would join a short list of nations and firms landing on the moon.



FOXCONN TO PRODUCE MITSUBISHI MOTORS' ELECTRIC VEHICLES IN TAIWAN

FOXCONN
OXTRON
MODEL C

Taiwan-based Foxconn, formally known as Hon Hai Precision Industry and a major producer of Apple's iPhones, has secured a deal to manufacture electric vehicles (EVs) for Japan's Mitsubishi Motors, with production set to begin in Taiwan.

The agreement, confirmed by a source familiar with the matter, targets Australia and New Zealand for initial vehicle rollouts starting in late 2026, marking Foxconn's first major EV contract with a global automaker. For Mitsubishi, the partnership aims to reduce production costs and accelerate its EV lineup development, while Foxconn seeks to expand its automotive ambitions beyond consumer electronics.

Foxtron, a joint venture between Foxconn and Taiwan's Yulon Motor Co., will produce the EVs under a memorandum of understanding with Mitsubishi, as announced by both companies.

The deal follows Mitsubishi's discussions with Nissan and Honda on EV software development, with a proposed Honda-Nissan merger falling through in December 2024, opening opportunities for Foxconn.

The vehicles, expected to be compact urban EVs, align with Mitsubishi's goal to have all models as EVs or hybrids by 2035, amidst competition from Chinese EV makers like BYD. No financial details were disclosed, and production timelines remain unspecified beyond the 2026 target.

AGREEMENT DETAILS AND OBJECTIVES

Foxtron, leveraging Foxconn's manufacturing expertise and Yulon's automotive experience, will produce Mitsubishi's new EV model in Taiwan, with exports planned for Australia and

New Zealand in the second half of 2026. The non-binding memorandum requires further negotiations, as stated by Mitsubishi and Foxtron representatives.

Mitsubishi aims to cut production costs and shorten development cycles, while Foxconn seeks to establish a foothold in the EV market.

A Mitsubishi spokesperson emphasized openness to collaboration, while Foxconn declined to comment, per The Japan Times. The deal builds on Foxconn's earlier automotive ventures, including a failed Lordstown Motors project in Ohio.

FOXCONN'S ROLE AS IPHONE PRODUCER AND EV AMBITIONS

Foxconn, the world's largest contract electronics manufacturer, is best known for assembling Apple's iPhones, producing millions annually in factories across Taiwan, China, and India. Its expertise in precision manufacturing and supply chain management, honed through a $1.3 billion investment in auto-related acquisitions over the past decade, supports its EV ambitions.

Foxtron, formed with Yulon, has developed EV prototypes like the Model B hatchback and Model C crossover, showcased at Hon Hai Tech Day 2024 in Taipei.

The Mitsubishi deal positions Foxconn to compete with traditional automakers, leveraging its technological capabilities to diversify from smartphones, as stated by chief strategy officer Jun Seki, a former Nissan executive, in a Taipei Times interview.

xconn
D3
C155
A12
C87

MITSUBISHI'S EV STRATEGY AND COMPETITION

Mitsubishi, a junior partner in the Nissan alliance, targets having its entire lineup as EVs or hybrids by 2035, facing intense competition from Chinese manufacturers like BYD, which reported a 76% sales increase in Q1 2025.

The outsourcing agreement with Foxtron aims to lower costs and speed up EV development, as Mitsubishi lags behind rivals like Tesla and BYD, according to Kyodo News. The compact urban EVs will cater to markets favoring smaller vehicles, starting with Oceania.

Mitsubishi is also discussing EV software development with Nissan and Honda, with a tie-up expected to be announced soon, as reported by NHK World-Japan, enhancing its technological capabilities.

PRODUCTION PLANS AND MARKET TARGETS

Foxtron will assemble the EVs at a Yulon facility in Taiwan, with initial exports targeting Australia and New Zealand, followed by potential rollouts in Taiwan and Japan, per a source cited by Focus Taiwan. The vehicles, based on Foxtron's Model B platform, are codenamed "n5" and expected to launch in 2026, as stated by the Taipei Times. Foxconn's chairman, Young Liu, oversees EV development, with Seki managing Japanese market operations, per industry sources.

Foxconn's manufacturing plans include facilities in the U.S., Thailand, India, and the Middle East, with North American production of the Model C crossover slated for Q4 2025.

FOXTRON
MODEL B

MODEL V

REGULATORY AND INDUSTRY CONTEXT

The deal navigates a complex regulatory landscape, with U.S. tariffs impacting global supply chains, as seen in Volvo's 11% sales drop in April 2025 due to similar duties. Mitsubishi's cost-cutting strategy aligns with industry trends, as Japanese automakers like Honda and Nissan, who abandoned a merger in December 2024, seek partnerships to counter Chinese EV dominance.

Foxconn's prior EV ventures, including a joint venture with Saudi Arabia's Ceer and a deal with Monarch Tractor, demonstrate its automotive push, though challenges like the Lordstown bankruptcy highlight risks, as reported by The Washington Post.

The Mitsubishi partnership, with no immediate financial details, positions Foxconn to leverage its iPhone production expertise in a competitive EV market.

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SPECIAL EDITION" Spirits were high at Apple's "There's more in the making" event, which was held at the Howard Gilman Opera House in Brooklyn, New York on October 30. Hot off the heels of the launch of the new iPhone XS, XS Max and XR, Tim Cook and Co were ready to show off next-generation models of two of the company's most beloved products: the Mac, and the iPad. Introducing a whole host of new editions, this was an Apple event to

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